



North End Connection

The Newsletter of the Creston
Neighborhood Association
Spring 2010

Why Sandy Stuckhardt is connecting with CNA as a new board member

“There’s a difference between living in a neighborhood and being part of the neighborhood”, so says Sandy Stuckhardt, CNA’s new board president. “There’s so much here to be grateful for; great neighbors, lots of green space, close proximity to downtown, and a sense of long-term commitment to the area. Being an active member of the neighborhood association adds a whole other dimension. I get to meet neighbors and business owners from outside my immediate area near Briggs Park and I get to really feel the pulse and the soul of the north end. I like to be able to say, I know what’s going on in my neighborhood and I played a small part in it.”

Stuckhardt knows neighborhoods. As a former Director of the West Grand Neighborhood Organization, Stuckhardt and her coworkers were instrumental in writing local and federal grants resulting in approximately \$1M of community resources to the Westside community. That included building partnerships and coordinating and facilitating hundreds of community meetings with potential funders, government officials, city employees, businesses, neighborhood residents, and school and church members. These partnerships resulted in the launching of several Westside neighborhood programs including, the Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth, The Westside Cherry Street Health Clinic, the former West Grand Development Corporation, presently NEW Development Corporation, and the West Grand Rapids Planning Committee whose members included the West Leonard, Stockbridge and W.



Photo: Pete Tabberer

Sandy Stuckhardt was elected to the CNA Board in October 2009 and currently serves as Board President.

Fulton Business associations as well as SWAN, John Ball Park and West Grand neighborhood associations.

Wanting to impact a larger area of Grand Rapids, Stuckhardt worked as the Assistant Director of Grand Rapids Operation Weed & Seed, a U.S. Department of Justice community-based initiative that “weeds out crime and seeds with community development” and is an innovative and comprehensive multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community revitalization. There she

-Continued on page 3-

Local Business Profile: That Place on Plainfield

by *Linda Ortman*

It's almost been a year since chef Mar Ben Cudia took over the restaurant that has long been a north end favorite. Several owners have struggled and moved on, but with his simple philosophy of "good food shouldn't cost a lot", he is already seeing steady growth and many happy customers. People really appreciate his home cooking.

If you haven't been to That Place lately you should drop in for a hearty breakfast, a delicious after dinner dessert, or anything in between. Mar Ben has a new menu with many interesting choices as well as old standards.

Mar Ben moved to the Grand Rapids area in 1992 to attend GVSU on an academic scholarship and as things often go...he fell into the restaurant business. He has cooked for Bobby J, The Cherie Inn, Applebee's and most recently for Pilar, from

whom he bought the restaurant. He says his skills were honed in the school of hard knocks.

Mar Ben isn't afraid of a little hard work! As the owner he also steps in as greeter, chef, fix-it man and dishwasher.

Because February will be his one year anniversary, That Place is looking to celebrate! They'll be serving some new delicious desserts (we had samples!) and sending out coupons in the Money Clips mailers. Watch for them after February 19th, cut them out, and bring a friend in for a tasty meal. You'll be happy you did! I think you'll agree it's nice to have a friendly owner and good food on Plainfield again.

**Where Everything is
Yummalicious!**

**2162 Plainfield NE
Mon - Sat: 7am to 8pm
Sun: 8am to 3pm**



Neighborhood volunteers gather for party

by Dorothy Velasco

On January 14 2010, the Creston Neighborhood's own historical Shanahan Mansion was aglow with the last vestiges of Christmas cheer and splendor as Glenn and Sue Disosway hosted the Creston Neighborhood Association's - A Great Neighbor 2010 Desert Party. Volunteers, committee chairs, and block captains were invited to a celebration of their gifts of time given to the Creston Neighborhood to promote social, economic and environmental health.

It was an exciting and fun evening. When entering the foyer of the mansion each and every person took a deep breath as they took in the beauty of the home, still dressed for Christmas. As each

person was introduced to the others many explicatory comments were shared about how special they felt to be invited to such a wonderful party, and how good it feels to be honored for their volunteer efforts.

As people gathered around the dining room and side tables filled

with pastries and fruit everyone shared their stories about how they have come to be involved as a Creston volunteer. Some started by simply making some telephone calls for the organization. Some volunteered to help organize a project - like the perennial exchange or rain

a block captain. As they shared how they have been of service to their community, they also expressed their ideas for further improvements and their desires to continue to be involved.



The plans for A Great Neighbor 2011 Desert Party are underway. We'd like to include you in the celebration of what is possibly the most active volunteer community in the area. The Creston Neighborhood Association is committed to connecting the neighbors on the North End of Grand Rapids. We want to increase your sense of belonging to a neighborhood that

you are part of maintaining and improving. You may not know how you may be of service to your community until you talk to someone at CNA. Please call 616-454-7900 to let us know that you are wondering how you may be of service to your immediate community.

barrel making workshop. Some have been sought out by Creston because of a particular skill they have, like marketing, website design, photography, and fund raising. Others recognized a need for improvements in their neighborhoods and helped to organize block clubs and then moved on to become

Why Sandy is connecting with CNA continued from front page

launched the Neighborhood Employment Initiative that included the start of two Neighborhood Computer Technology Centers, one in the Garfield Park Neighborhood and one on the Westside where access to computers were vital to people who lacked skills and transportation for applying for jobs.

Later, a position at Local Initiatives Support Corporation

took Stuckhardt across the state where she worked with non-profit community development organizations to "map" the organization's capacity along a spectrum of progressive measurements that focused identifying an organization's current capacity stage and on using that information to help create growth and move an organization to higher stages of achievement.

"That's all process stuff", says Stuckhardt, "but what I'm really all about is the quality of life and living conditions in inner city neighborhoods. Suburbs are fine for some but I love the vitality and closeness I feel in a neighborhood. Creston offers me that along with the opportunity to impact the positive things happening in the place I choose to live."

The importance of weatherization year round

by *Ben Rausch*

Its official. Winter is here, and its going to stick around for a long time. To me, the worst part of winter is not the snow shoveling or the slippery roads or the 8 hours of daylight; those things are tolerable with the right attitude. What I hate most about winter is winter utility bills. I work extra shifts to pay them. I don't go out so I can pay them. I actually start saving money to pay them in July!!

This year will be different. I went with the Living Green in Creston committee to a class put on by Home Repair Services (HRS). The class was really informative and

interesting, and now I have the know-how to winterize my home. They even gave everyone who attended a gift bag worth about \$45 full of energy saving products.

The most important thing you can do to your house to save on your utilities is to fill holes and gaps in your walls and windows. Drafty windows not only will make your house uncomfortably chilly but will cost you an arm and a leg in bills. You can stop the leaks by caulking around your window sill, putting putty around the edges of the glass and putting window treatments over the windows. These are

particularly effective and I swear by them. If you are not sure what window treatments are, it is pretty much a giant piece of saran wrap in front of the window that keeps a pocket of air between your leaky window and

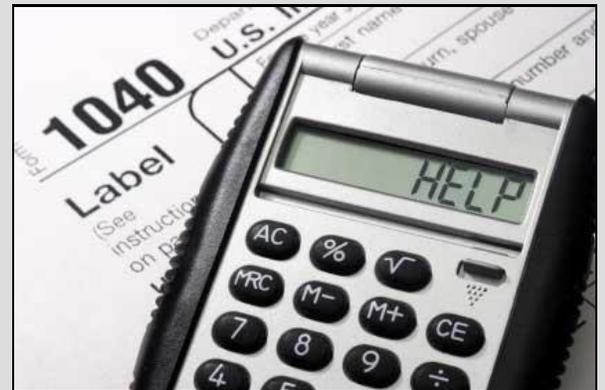
your house. It is very effective at stopping drafts. You will notice the difference immediately. Another real easy solution is to get a can of Great Stuff and fill all the spaces around door frames and basement windows and any other holes you can find that are leaking air. One more quick tip to save money is to lower the temperature on your water heater. After attending the class, I came home to find my water heater was set as high as it goes.

I would highly recommend attending a class at HRS to anyone who wants to cut their utility bills this winter. The classes are free of charge and you do not need an appointment. You might even get some free stuff. With just a few simple steps you could literally save hundreds on your utilities this winter. It is never too late to take steps to save energy, but do them as soon as you can to save the most money. For more info and a list of the classes offered by HRS, visit their website at www.homerepairservices.org



Need Help Filing Your Income Taxes?

It is not too late to have your Income Taxes prepared for FREE. If you have one or more children and your family's income was less than \$49,000 during 2009 or if you're single or in a family without children and your income was less than \$29,000 you qualify to have your taxes prepared for free at any one of the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) sites in the Grand Rapids area. To find a location near you, call 211 or 459-2255 (if using certain cell phones). Then call the VITA site for an appointment. They will be happy to assist you. But call as soon as possible—appointments are limited.



Local Business Profile: Suzie's Boutique

by *Linda Ortman*

Are you feeling those winter blues? What better way to perk yourself up than to go shopping for a cute new sweater, scarf or pair of earrings? No need to head to Rockford, East GR or the mall. We have a great little boutique right here in our neighborhood and I know you'll find something stylish there to jazz up your wardrobe.

Suzie's Boutique may seem a little off the beaten path, but once you find it, I'm sure you'll become a regular customer. This trendy shop focuses on missy clothing, accessories and gift items for ladies from 25 to 60, sizes 4 to 18 with even a few things for babies and young girls.

There are some beautiful pashminas, stylish bags, and jewelry made by local north end artist, Debby Bricker. Suzie

also has some very unique gift items, all at good prices.

So call a friend and plan a shopping adventure today. Stop at Suzie's Donuts first for a hearty breakfast or tasty lunch then wander down to the boutique and see what new things have arrived. I know you'll have a fun time and it will make that cold winter day seem a little brighter and spring a little closer!

**1120 Knapp NE
located in the same mini-
mall as Suzie's Donuts**

**Hours: Tues - Sat
10am to 7pm**



Free rain barrel workshops, free rain barrels

by *Caroline*

Our neighborhood's Living Green in Creston committee (LGC), in partnership with the West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), is pleased to announce free rain barrel workshops to be held around the Creston neighborhood starting in March. These workshops will be free and open to Creston neighbors by contacting the CNA office.

LGC members have been interested in finding practical ways to impact the local environment without negatively impacting the local wallet; free rain barrel workshops fit the bill well, with the bonus of time spent with other neighbors in our community.

So what impact can a rain barrel have? In a nutshell, rain barrels collect water for that "unrainy" day when our gardens are gasping, saving the cost of 50 gallons of water each time the rain barrel fills up and at the same time keeping water out of the city's storm water system.

And why keep water out of the city's storm water system?

The city's storm water system is desperately overtaxed because over the years, the city has been covered with nonporous surfaces where rain can't do what it was meant to do: soak into the ground, to get naturally cleaned and filtered, replenishing ground water reserves.

Think about all the hardscaped surfaces everywhere: roads and parking lots, driveways, roofs, and an awful lot of compacted lawn that is as impermeable as cement. (During a heavy rain, the water rushes off my lawn and my cement driveway at the same rate.) **Storm water has nowhere to go, but to rush onto the sidewalk and out to the street, where the storm drains carry all that water (along with the fertilizer, pet waste, gas, oil, and debris from our lawns and driveways), dumping it directly (and unfiltered) into our waterways, eroding and poisoning streams, rivers, and ultimately the Great Lakes,** our source for drinking water.

There is a lot to do to keep our waterways from being further

degraded; it can feel overwhelming. We all contribute to the problem. It is helpful to remember that one road was paved at a time; one lawn was put in at a time. Undoing some of the damage one rain barrel at a time is one thing many of us can do quite simply. For more information on rain barrels and to view our LGC committee making our own rain barrels, go to <http://wmeac.org/index.php/water/protecting-water/rain-barrel-video/>.

Also, look for a future article about water that goes to the treatment plant, which is different from storm water.

Space for the workshop is limited, so call 454-7900 to reserve your space today.

Rain Barrel Workshop
Saturday, March 13
12pm
Call 454-7900 to sign-up
Cost: FREE



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Community-Based Response To the Foreclosure Crisis

by Deborah Eid

On Tuesday Dec. 2, 2009, Creston neighborhood hosted a group of Foreclosure prevention experts and activists at a lovely renovated home at 1240 Emerald Ave. N.E. The home is one of those offered by local non-profit housing corporation New Development Corporation. The event received good television coverage that night on local stations 8, 13 and 17. CNA leaders and members of the public safety committee were present at the press conference and interviewed again later that night as they met on Plainfield at the new Wired Cafe to discuss their ongoing problem solving response to vacant homes in Creston. Read excerpts from the Press Release below.

Since May 2009 renters are protected from untimely eviction with a mandatory 90 day notice before they have to move. Renters can call Legal Aid at 774-0672 ext. 101.

As of last July, homeowners have new protections in Michigan but must respond within 2 weeks to any letter about a possible foreclosure. Contact Home Repair Services at 241-2601 to make an appointment with a free counselor.

In the Creston neighborhood, 850 families have already experienced this trauma. While the impacts to families and especially children can be devastating, neighborhoods are suffering as well. Foreclosed homes are often left vacant and contribute to more crime, blight, lower property values and less tax revenue for critical services.

Creston and many others in Grand Rapids are taking innovative approaches to turn the tables and revitalize their neighborhoods.

Deborah Eid, the Executive Director of CNA stated, "We launched the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program to stabilize and promote reinvestment in our community by developing an asset-based approach to organizing and education. Neighbors are connecting with neighbors in the areas of Creston where we believe we can have the greatest impact. We have initiated a neighborhood specific mapping project to help us identify vacant properties and help distressed families.

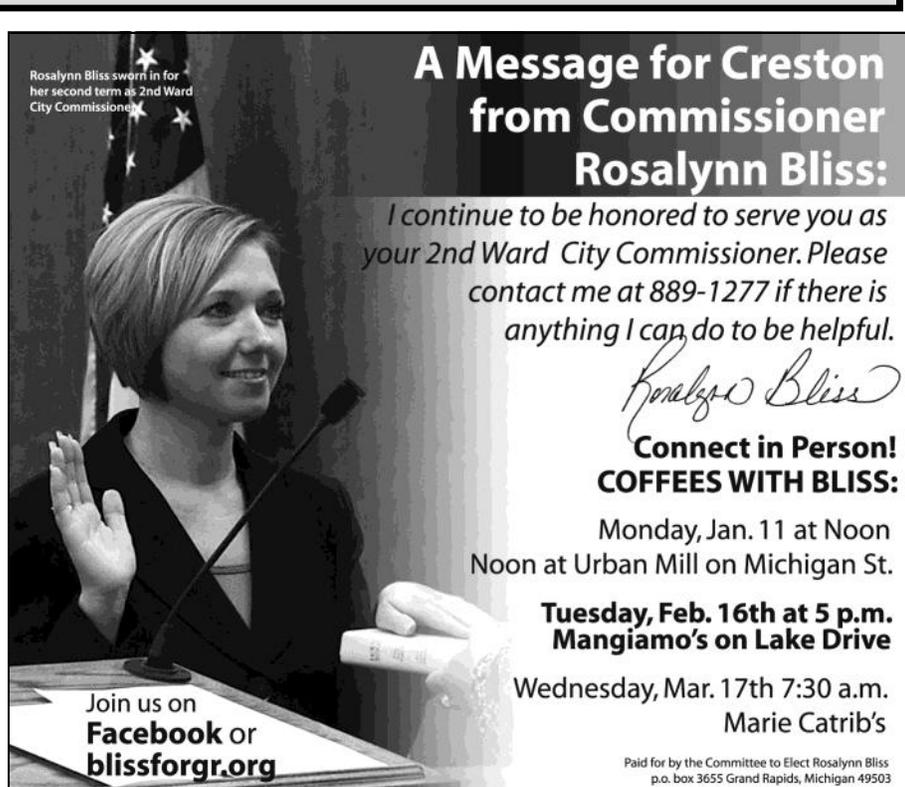
We're also working with businesses and community members to help market our Creston homes."

Very soon, volunteers will be shoveling snow in front of vacant, neglected houses.

Creston is part of a large group working with the city to beef up policies so banks and other owners of vacant properties contribute adequate fees for the city to enforce the maintenance code.

"We're working to ensure that the owners of these properties remain accountable for maintaining their properties," stated Kym Spring with Foreclosure Response.

Visit foreclosureresponse.org for more info.



**A Message for Creston
from Commissioner
Rosalynn Bliss:**

I continue to be honored to serve you as your 2nd Ward City Commissioner. Please contact me at 889-1277 if there is anything I can do to be helpful.

Rosalynn Bliss

**Connect in Person!
COFFEES WITH BLISS:**

Monday, Jan. 11 at Noon
Noon at Urban Mill on Michigan St.

**Tuesday, Feb. 16th at 5 p.m.
Mangiamo's on Lake Drive**

Wednesday, Mar. 17th 7:30 a.m.
Marie Catrib's

Join us on
**Facebook or
blissforgr.org**

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Rosalynn Bliss
p.o. box 3655 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Up-To-Date Crime Info at Your Fingertips

by *Mac Brown*

As some of our residents already may know, the GRPD has partnered with the website crimemapping.com. At a cost to the GRPD of \$100 dollars a month, this offer is able to provide up-to-date crime related information to all its citizens free of charge. Not only does it provide more ownership and control for our neighbors who actively engage in the safety and protection of their neighborhood, it also greatly increases the transparency of our police department.

The following is a description of how it will work. When you get to the website there will be fifteen different crimes that you can choose to query within a certain radius of your home. The different icons that pop up on the map will each pertain to a different crime within the selected radius. When you click on a specific icon, an info box will



pop up giving you details about that certain incident. The details will include the date and time, block where crime occurred, a description of how it is filed with the GRPD, and the police report number. This information will be updated twice daily once in the morning and in the evening. Another great feature for our neighbors will be the ability to sign up for email alerts free of charge. Neighbors will be able to set a predetermined radius and

preference of the crimes they wish to be alerted about.

When using this service, if you come across a certain incident that you would benefit from more detail in helping your neighborhood watch prevent further crime, please contact your block captain. If you are not sure who your block captain is or you do not have one and think that your block would benefit from a more organized neighborhood watch, please contact Mac Brown, Community Safety Organizer at CNA. CNA is always on the look out for new neighborhood leadership that has a little extra time to help us ensure a safe neighborhood for all, something that should be a top priority for us all. You can access this new tool today! Here's how: go to the City of Grand Rapids website, click on police department and follow the link from there.

You can also go to: crimemapping.com and pick Grand Rapids, MI.

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Then and Now at Fat Boy

by Ruth Kelly



Not too long ago Carl and I were having breakfast at Fat Boy's and met a regular customer, Art Palmer. Turns out, Art's been meeting his nutritional needs at this location for years. He remembers when what's now Fat Boy was a Tasty Freeze around 1954 when it took up only the front bar and kitchen area. Soon after Don Baker, the original owner, added on and put a counter in. That's when Art and his buddies from Creston High school turned it into the neighborhood hangout. That's also when Tasty Freeze became Fat Boy. Now students could get soft ice cream at the front, and hefty hamburgers at the back counter.

Fat Boy became the neighborhood hangout for Creston's class skippers and after school crowd. On the rare occasion when it became necessary, owner Don Baker wielded his steel level to break up the few fights that happened there. Art recalls that in 1958 when he was a senior at Creston, the star quarterback had a brand new Ford. Another student had his Oldsmobile and they challenged each other to a drag race along Plainfield north of Fat Boy. This was back when there was no Meijer store and the Mc Donald's on Plainfield was one of the first in the country! Oh, and the Oldsmobile won. But don't worry Ford, the last Oldsmobile, a burgundy-looking Alero sedan, rolled off an assembly line on April 29, 2004 in Lansing, Michigan.

After Art graduated Fat Boy changed owners a couple of times until Matt and Jill Urbane bought and remodeled this classic burger and breakfast joint in 2009. Matt previously owned the North Park Café, so he's not new to flipping burgers and making breakfast. One big change from the old days of Fat Boy: no smoking. With a clean, repainted interior and new booths and furniture, Fat Boy's redo is a signal that the Creston neighborhood is alive and well!



O'Brien & O'Brien, D.D.S., P.C.

Dr. Jon G. O'Brien

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1503 Coit NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Welcome New* & Renewing Members!

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Richard L. and Janet F. Bennett
Richard Blodgett
Shirley Boyle
Marjean and Clay Brillhart
Janette Buhl
Larry and Sue Capps
Ed Cavanaugh
Duane and Marie-Clare Culver
Kimberly D'Addario*
Jolene DeLuca
Tuti and Pete DeMaagd
William and Gloria Eastham
Robert and Donna Eggleston
Penny Essenberg
Stanley Jr. and Kelly Faski
Michael and Terri Firlik
Allen Gerrard
Tim and Lynne Goodwin
Thomas and Laura Gottschalk
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Martha Hammond
Chris and Kristin Hanks*
Bruce and Joette Hansen*
Richard and Joan Hathaway
Carl Heule*
Laura Higgins
Joseph and Jeanne Howell
Thelma Innis*
Elizabeth Jensen and Bruce Miller*

Mary and Dave Kirvan*
Mary Koenen
Don and Terry Koopman
Anne Kozal
Emily Kozlowicz
Kathy and Terry Kuhn
Molly and Doug Lachniet
Richard and Joyce Locke
Jeff and Shellie Lovall*
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Ruth Ringler
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Kathy Rups

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- Burton St. S.W., 3 lights from U.S. 131



Ph. 616-452-2161
Toll-free 888-729-6728
www.mpcu.org



Creston Neighborhood Association
205 Carrier NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
616.454.7900
Fax 616.454.8190
www.crestongr.com

Office Hours
Monday-Friday 10am-2pm

The Creston Neighborhood Association is a nonprofit organization serving the northeast Grand Rapids community whose boundaries are Leonard Street to the south, the Grand River to the west, Four Mile Road to the North, then Plainfield Avenue south to I-96 and along the city corporation line to Knapp Street, east to Fuller Avenue, then south to Leonard Street. Membership is open to anyone inside or outside of these boundaries.

The Creston Neighborhood Association Board of Directors meets on the fourth Thursday of most months. Meetings are open to the public—contact our office for time and location.

Board of Directors

Tommy Allen (Secretary)
Brett Alward
Glenn Disosway (Treasurer)
Emily Martin (Vice President)
Steve Sax
Sandy Stuckhardt (President)
Dorothy Velasco

Staff

Deborah Eid, Executive Director
Mackenzie Brown, Community Safety Organizer
Sue Capps, Executive Assistant
Carol Brugger, AARP Receptionist

The North End Connection is the newsletter of the Creston Neighborhood Association, published 4 times a year. Circulation: 1000. Advertising space is available. Contact our office for rate information.

Newsletter contributors:

Mackenzie Brown, Carol Brugger, Sue Capps, Caroline, Deborah Eid, Ruth Kelly, Emily Martin, Linda Ortman, Ben Rausch, Sandy Stuckhardt, Pete Tabberer, Dorothy Velasco

A City of Grand Rapids Community Development Block Grant and Justice Assistance Grant Funded Program

The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the staff, Board of Directors or membership of the organization.

Become a Member!

“Working together, we can maintain a safe, friendly neighborhood, revitalize our commercial district and maintain the beautiful assets around us.”

**-Sandy Stuckhardt,
CNA resident and member**

Yes, I want to support CNA

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Email _____

- I wish to receive my newsletters and alerts electronically,
- I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities

Please check any of the options that apply:

- I wish to pay annual resident membership dues of \$20 per household.
- I wish to pay annual business membership dues of \$50 per nonprofit organization or \$75 per for-profit organization.
- I wish to make a contribution of _____

Total memberships and contributions enclosed: _____

Please make your check payable to Creston Neighborhood Association and mail it with this application to: Creston Neighborhood Association
205 Carrier St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505

- Check here if you prefer not to be listed in our newsletter.



Creston Neighborhood Association
205 Carrier NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Community Calendar

CNA BOARD MEETING

Thursday, February 25 · 6:30pm
CNA Offices (205 Carrier NE)

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 13 · 12pm
call 454-7900 to sign-up

CNA HAPPY HOUR

Monday, March 15 · 5:30-7:30pm
Sazerac Lounge (1418 Plainfield NE)

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Saturday, March 20 · 8am-11am
2nd Congregational Church (525 Cheshire NE)

CNA BOARD MEETING

Thursday, March 25 · 6:30pm
CNA Offices (205 Carrier NE)

Want even more frequent updates on the activities of the Creston Neighborhood Association?

Visit our newly redesigned website at

crestongr.com



North End Connection

Spring 2010