



North End Connection

The Newsletter of the Creston
Neighborhood Association

Summer 2013

Monroe Ave: making our voices heard!

By: Pete Tabberer

Riverside Park is an important part of our neighborhood. Many of us enjoy the facilities, the access to the Grand River, or the section of the White Pine Trail that passes through the park. Monroe Avenue, which runs along the eastern side of the park, is a busy, well used road. Neighbors in the area have raised concerns about that section of Monroe Avenue for several years.

Some of the most common complaints include: inconsistent speed limits, difficulty crossing Monroe to get to the park, inadequate on street parking and a lack of consistent sidewalks and handicap accessible curbing, the latter of which sometimes forces wheelchair bound veterans to ride in the street. Riverside Park neighbors and members of CNA's board of directors have been voicing these concerns to the city since at least 2006.

The city is planning on resurfacing and making improvements to this stretch of Monroe Avenue. With the help of CNA, city staff involved Riverside Park neighbors in the planning process. City planning staff met with neighbors, heard their concerns and made adjustments to the plans. The result of this process will be



Photo by: Pete Tabberer

One of four traffic circles will be at the Riverside Park entrance at Guild and Monroe. Another will be located at the Knapp and Monroe entrance.

significant upgrades for the two miles of Monroe from Knapp to North Park. The project is slated to begin later this year and wrap up in 2014.

New sidewalks will be installed and a new bike path will be added on the west side of Monroe along Riverside Park. Bike lanes will also be installed over the North Park Bridge to provide safer access to the White Pine Trail. On street parking, new street lighting and around 80 new trees are also planned.

Perhaps the most visible upgrade will be the addition of four traffic circles at Knapp, Guild, 3 Mile and North Park. These will help to calm traffic and make

Monroe much safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Two of the traffic circles will be at park entrances, which will ease access to the park and make the park feel more like a part of the surrounding community.

The project will change Monroe "from high speed dragway to a gentle scenic connection along the park," said Brees Stam, Grand Rapids' senior project engineer. And to think that much of this happened because we, the community, made our voices heard. Keep up the good work, neighbors!

Become a Citizen Forester

By: Blake Hamilton, Associate Program Coordinator for FGRP

Over the last couple of months, several members of CNA's Living Green committee have participated in workshops through the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Urban Forest Project to become citizen foresters.

These workshops are fun and informative and provide a great way to build community with like-minded people while advocating and caring for our own urban forest here in the neighborhood and the city.

Here is some information about the Citizen Forester Program. It is open to anyone; join us, if you are interested in trees!

Citizen Foresters are the backbone of the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Urban Forest Project. As neighborhood stewards, advocates, and volunteer leaders citizen foresters help advance the City's goal of maximizing the tree canopy, enriching the quality of life for residents, and creating sustainable, beautiful neighborhoods for the community to enjoy.

The Citizen Forester program is composed of volunteers that help foster the importance of our City's urban forest. Without these skilled volunteers many of our tree plantings, maintenance projects, and organized events

would not have the resounding level of success that is currently being experienced.

To become a citizen forester in your neighborhood, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks is offering a series of workshops to provide opportunities for the public to become more knowledgeable about trees and to provide a foundation for understanding how to positively impact the City's urban forest.

Anyone with an interest in becoming a Citizen Forester, leading tree projects in the community, volunteering to participate with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks tree projects, or just needing tree related information, please contact Lee Mueller at 616-389-4687 or lee.mueller@friendsofgrpparks.org



Upcoming Citizen Forester workshops include:

Common Tree Issues, Insects, and Diseases (6-8 pm, August



8, Bunker Interpretive Center at Calvin College).

Tree Maintenance and Pruning (6:30-9 pm. August 19, Bunker Interpretive Center at Calvin College).

For more information visit www.urbanforestproject.com or contact CNA to get in touch with the Living Green committee.

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Welcoming Dizzy Dog to the neighborhood

By: Betty Westra

Located around the corner from Palmer School and down the street from the new City High, Dizzy Dog is a new enterprise with something different.

Opened on April 27 of this year by Ross Rockwell, this "family friendly restaurant" is an inviting addition to the neighborhood. Festooned with floral hanging baskets and a cheerful yellow ceiling it invites neighbors to come, sit at a picnic table and enjoy a cold drink, ice cream confection or a meal and conversation.

Mr. Rockwell grew up in this neighborhood, went to Creston High, caddied at the Kent Country Club and enjoyed ice cream treats at what was then Frosty Boy. He gained cooking expertise when he cooked at many of the Polish Halls in the area.

Dizzy Dog has a large menu of selections from corn dogs, ice cream, sundaes, floats, malts, flurries, hot dogs and chicken to calamari.

Dizzy Dog does a brisk business, especially from neighbors who love to come with their families, bringing strollers and dogs with them. Since the business is family friendly they get lots of repeat customers and will customize an order to fit the custom-

er's desires. Reasonable prices that help bring people in are from \$1.39 for an ice cream cone to \$6 for calamari.

Dizzy Dog's hours are from Mon.-Fri 11:30-10 pm, Sat. 12-10 pm and Sun. 2-8 pm, but they may close early if there are few customers or bad weather threatens.

Mr. Rockwell will stay open as long in the fall and winter as he can. He plans to offer fresh baked goods, homemade cookies, donuts, cider and some dinner specials in the fall. The menu will change with the seasons. He would like to enclose the porch and add a heater so customers can dine there in chilly weather.

Mr. Rockwell will also work with students from City High who will paint a mural on the wall on one side of the parking lot. The students, with the cooperation of the City High art teacher, will paint American icons such as a strip of the Pacific

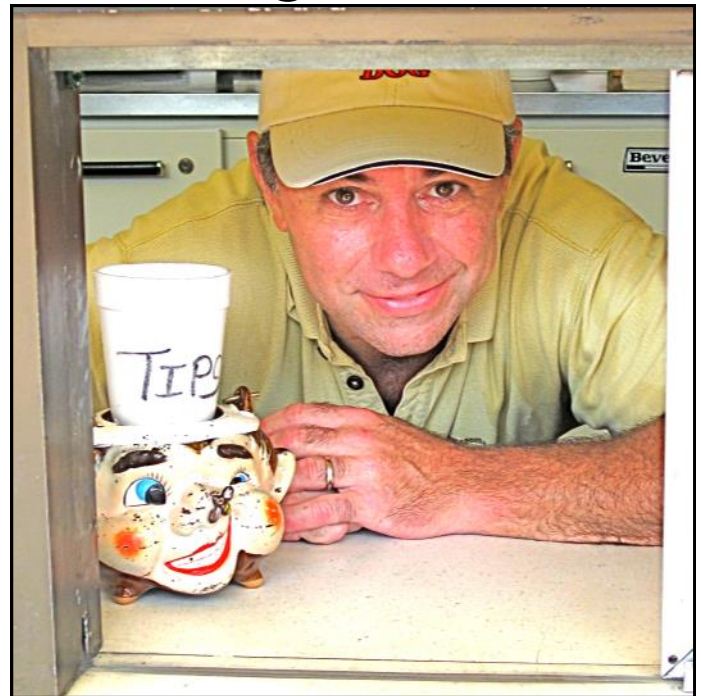


Photo by: Ray Westra

Ross Rockwell owns and operates the new Dizzy Dog, located at 1757 Plainfield

Ocean to the New York skyline and the Liberty Bell. He will certainly include the Great Lakes and scenes representing Grand Rapids and Detroit. Mr. Rockwell intends to place a 6 foot statue of Liberty at the end of the wall.

He welcomes students from City High to lunch at Dizzy Dog and intends to make menus and run specials for students. Hopefully the rest of us will come to visit the restaurant as well.



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Fire Safety

By: Sharon Zils

When the Federal Emergency Management Agency (F.E.M.A.) is mentioned, people often groan and shake their heads sadly. F.E.M.A.'s track record on the national level when responding to disasters may be questionable, but when their grant monies are paired with the Grand Rapids Fire Department, wonderful things happen: the new Residential Safety Program.

The Residential Safety Program is a one-of-a-kind fire prevention program and it is funded by the biggest F.E.M.A. grant in the country. This is the program's first year. RSP is starting with five area neighborhoods and Creston is the largest.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting the project manager, Michael Curtis when he conducted my Home Safety Assessment.

The purpose of the program is smoke alarm installation. I live in a two-story house with a full basement near Ann and Monroe, I had two smoke alarms but those were removed.

Instead, I became the proud recipient of five Kidde lithium battery smoke alarms. One was installed in the basement, another one on the main level of the house, and finally one in each bedroom with an additional one in the upstairs hall.

The appointment takes about a half hour. The pre-test questions are simple. They pertain to the physical makeup of your home, for example: the number of doors and windows, if you have a gas or electric stove and the number of bedrooms.

The post-test covers information that you learn during the

installation. The answers to those questions are basic common sense, such as "If your smoke alarm sounds due to a fire, what do you do?" Answer: escape and call 911. Also, there are a couple questions concerning the use of the equipment which Mr. Curtis was more than happy to show me.

My experience was fast, easy and, oh, did I neglect to mention the most important part? It's FREE!

Maybe a few facts and statistics will convince you to pick up that phone or power up that computer to sign up. Seventy-six percent of fires occur in residential homes and 51% of those are owner-occupied. Locally, 40% of those fires are in one of the targeted neighborhoods. So it gives you pause to ask, "Am I next?" And don't think it can't happen to you because 48% of those that occur are in the kitchen and are due to cooking.

See? You eat, don't you? And more than likely, someone in your home is preparing those meals.

So, those of you who know me, now have my voice speaking these words in your head.

What are you waiting for? Contact the RSP now. You will be glad that you did...if only to stop the voices, or in this case, my voice, in your head.

The qualifications are simple: be a home owner within CNA boundaries, and reside in the home. But it only works if you set up an appointment. You can do that by calling Kim or Mike at 456-3966 or sending an email to kpanter@grcity.us



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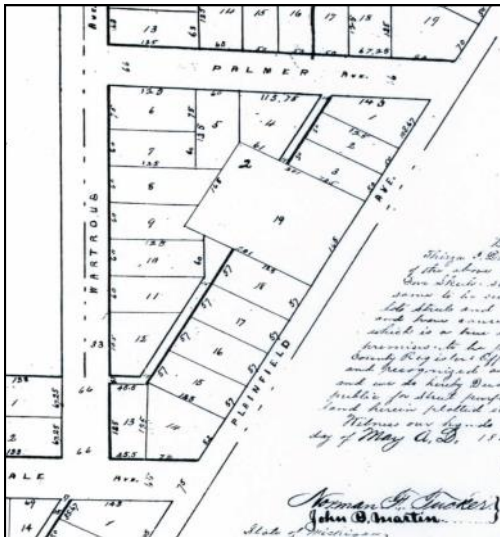
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Local History: Creston landmarks lost to fire

By: Pete Tabberer

Fire was a constant danger to city dwellers of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Buildings were of primarily lumber construction, had wooden shingle roofs and were often heated by coal. Grand Rapids had its share of devastating fires, such as in July of 1873, when strong winds and dry weather fueled a blaze that eventually burned nearly 15 blocks of the City along Bridge Street.

Although Creston was spared from catastrophes of this magnitude, there were still many fires in the neighborhood. In the early days of the 20th century we lost two well known landmarks to fire.



An 1884 plat map showing a section of the land originally owned by Henry Wartrous. His house stood on the oversized lot in the center.

The Wartrous House

In 1862 a wealthy lumberman named Henry Wartrous decided to move his family out of the city. He bought land on the west side of Plainfield Avenue and built a large, three story house between what would eventually become

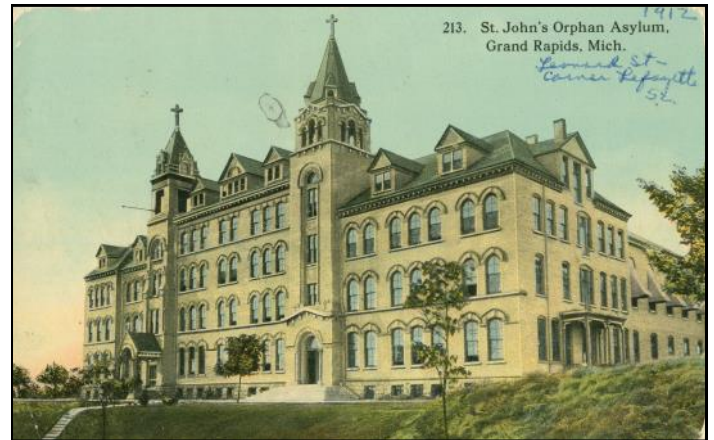
Dale and Palmer Streets (this was, at the time, well north of the city limits). Henry died in 1882 and the land, including the house, was platted and sold.

In February of 1905, Melvin Willets and his family were living in the house when a fire started in a chimney. The fire quickly spread to the roof and the neighbors called the fire department. It had snowed recently and as a result the fire department was slow arriving. That, combined with poor water pressure, prevented them from controlling the fire and the house burned to the ground.

Although the Wartrous house was considered "one of the landmarks of the North End," (Grand Rapids Press, February 14, 1905) no photos or drawings of it are known to exist. If any readers know of any, please let us know.

St. John's Home

In the late 1800s epidemics of typhus, scarlet fever, and cholera swept through West Michigan, leaving behind a large population of orphans. The local catholic community, led by Bishop Henry Richter, took it upon themselves to save these children from a life of poverty and poor health. A wealthy lumberman named John Clancy bequeathed \$60,000 for an orphanage. In 1888 five acres at the corner of Leonard and Lafayette were purchased and the first portion of St. John's Or-



A postcard, dated 1912, shows St. John's Orphan Asylum as it looked before the 1911 fire. *Courtesy Grand Rapids Public Library (Coll 89-2-128).*

phan Asylum opened a year later.

In November of 1911, just as the Dominican sisters and around 20 children in their care were sitting down for supper, a fire broke out in the southwest wing of the building. All the children and the sisters escaped unharmed, but the building was not as lucky. By the time firefighters were able to stop the blaze, most of the wing was lost.

It was initially reported that the fire began when a little girl dropped a burning scrap of paper while trying to light a gas lamp. The sisters came to the girl's defense, and later reports clarified that the fire was probably not started by a child, but most likely began, like the Wartrous house, in a chimney.

The building was rebuilt, though the orphanage soon moved to a smaller location. The four story "castle" on Leonard sat empty for many years and was eventually torn down. St. John's Home is currently located on Knapp Street and continues to do great work helping the less fortunate children of our community.

Healing racism in our community

By: Deborah Eid

On March 22, 2013 CNA and North Quarter staff and board members attended the annual forum held by Partners for a Racism Free Community. The day-long workshop featured local and national speakers discussing how to move towards a racism free community.

Having "blame-free conversa-

tions about racism" is one of the tools the group recommends. Bruce Roller, executive director of United Church Outreach Ministry, says the goal of their work is to move us to "a place where racism is more uncomfortable than we are confronting it."

Dr. Gail Christopher, vice president for program strategy with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, opened the day with a dis-

cussion of how the roots of racism are embedded in our conscious and unconscious minds. Christopher challenged us to make racial healing a national priority and shared the tragic statistic that 506 African-American children were killed in the city of Chicago in 2012 by gun violence. She contrasted the low profile of this information in the media with the

See: Healing, Pg. 9

Finding new owners for area foreclosures

By: David C. Allen, Executive Director Kent County Land Bank Authority

In the coming months foreclosed homes in Grand Rapids will, with the help of the Kent County Land Bank Authority (KCLBA), come one step closer to finding new owners.

The City of Grand Rapids recently exercised its right of first refusal and is purchasing all of the tax foreclosures in Grand Rapids. The city then plans to sell the properties to the KCLBA.

The KCLBA will be handling the care and resale of these properties and expects to take deed to all the properties mid to late July. Once the KCLBA takes deed to the properties two things will happen: First, we will begin the process to legally clear the title

on all of the properties. Second, we will prepare all of the properties to be listed on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) with Grand Rapids Association of Realtors agents. This means we will be changing locks, cleaning out the properties, and making any major repairs needed to ensure the security and safety of the homes.

We expect to be done with this process by late September to early October, at which time all of the properties will be listed in "As Is" condition on the MLS.

Once we have the agents assigned to the properties we will list all of the addresses and the



Photo Courtesy: togetherlearn.com

agent's contact information on our web site: www.kclba.org. The KCLBA ensures that every property that is sold receives all necessary renovations and improvements. Learn more about this process at: www.kclba.org/work-with-us

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Andrew Harmon: community gardener

In the summer we here at the North End Connection run an article about our community gardens. This summer we thought we'd do things a little differently and let one of our gardeners tell you about his experiences in his own words. Andrew Harmon moved to Creston two years ago and lives just around the corner from the Carrier Street Garden. I recently had a chance to talk with him and he told me a little about himself and his experiences as a community gardener.

North End Connection: How did you become interested in gardening and how long have you been doing it?

Andrew Harmon: I have been interested in gardening since my grandparents on both sides had large gardens. I heard stories of their bounteous supply of fresh food and got to see my fathers' parents' garden a few times every year when I was small. I helped out gardening during the first year, the summer of 2011, and have rented a plot with a friend last summer and this summer.

NEC: What is your favorite thing to grow and why?

AH: Last year, my leeks were my favorite. I love potato leek soup. This year, I am excited about my beets. I love roasted beets in the fall and cool pickled or ginger beets in the summer.

NEC: What first drew you to the community garden?

AH: I had some friends who were organizing the community garden in Creston. I just wanted to learn about gardening and hang out with my friends and meet some new people.

NEC: What do you most enjoy about growing at the community garden?

AH: I enjoy having a nice place to grow food and meet people. It is a fun excuse to hang out with neighbors and connect over food. You get to experience the surplus, drought, sun, and rain with people who live close by.

NEC: For those of us interested in joining the community garden in the future, what should we expect?

AH: Enjoy some food! I am always getting new recipe ideas, new fruits, and new vegetables from other gardeners. Also, expect to make some friends. Also also, you can expect some good fresh air and sunshine. It is a great stress relief.

NEC: I imagine that one of the benefits of community gardening is getting tips from fellow growers. What is some good advice you have gotten, or what is some advice of your own that you'd like to share?

AH: Some of the gardeners have a lot of experience and are therefore full of wisdom of all

things gardening. I have heard that it is best to plant root veggies like carrots, radishes, and beets from seed, while it is best to plant tomatoes and peppers from starter plants. I have also learned to let some of my herbs go to seed and a fellow gardener showed me how to collect seeds to plant the following year.


If you are interested in renting a plot next year at one of your community gardens please visit crestoncommunitygardens.org, or call CNA at 454-7900.



Photo by: Pete Tabberer

Andrew Harmon is one of many devoted community gardeners who tends a plot at the Carrier Street Garden.

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Summer safety in our neighborhood

By: Mac Brown

The most enjoyable part of the year for the youth of our neighborhood is in full swing! As our youth take a break from school and venture out into the neighborhood, let's make sure we are keeping an eye out for their safety and encouraging good behavior.

Keep in mind that the City of Grand Rapids has a curfew ordinance in full effect year round. Please call the GRPD non-emergency number (456-3400) if you suspect seeing kids out past curfew. Children 11 years and under must be in by 10pm. 12-14 years, in by 11pm and 15-16 years must be in by midnight. If you are like me and have difficulty telling ages, call anyway. Better to err on the side of caution.

There have been increased incidences of vandalism by youths this year. If you see youth trespassing on property or meddling with another's property, make

sure that they know that they are being watched and call non-emergency if needed. Studies show that when youth know they are being watched, they are less likely to misbehave.

A "stranger danger" refresher with your children during the summer months is important for safe play on your block, in the park or at home. While flyering earlier this month I was surprised when a 5-year-old opened the door for me. Mom was doing yard work in the back and was nowhere to be seen. I gave her my flyer and told her to never ever EVER open the door for anyone she didn't know unless her parents were present.

Bullying is not just a school problem. It happens in our parks and on our blocks as well. If you are observing unsupervised youth in the park or on the block engaged in bullying, make your presence known and call GRPD if needed. Also, designated safe houses on your block can help to

ensure that those being bullied have a place to go.

The Creston Neighborhood represents many working class and single parent families who are left with no choice but to leave their pre-teens and teens home during work hours. The choice between food and shelter or child care is a tough one and any relief that we can give as a community by extending peace of mind to other parents on your block is greatly received. If you suspect a similar situation on your block, connect with that parent(s) to see how you may be able to assist.

Any questions or concerns that you may have regarding anything above, please call Mac Brown, CNA Community Safety Organizer at 454-7900.

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national attention to the terrible Newtown, Connecticut massacre of 22 young white children.

Cascade Engineering was honored at the event for their new status as the first credentialed partner in this local movement. They shared a video inspired by The Race Card Project, an initiative of Michele Norris, former *All Things Considered* co-host. As part of the Race Card Project, people give six words to summarize their experiences of racism. Here's a sample of some of these powerful 6 word phrases: *I am black with no arrests; Privilege: Why do I have it?; A box I check on all forms; A false Darwinian construct that promotes discrimination.* To participate in the project yourself, go to www.theracecardproject.com.

Artist, comedian and racism activist and educator Damali Ayo gave a 90 minute keynote that had participants laughing

and learning about her experiences as a woman of color. Ayo grew up in a black household in Washington, D.C. with a white mom who did not share her Italian ancestry with her daughters until recently. "We're still at a third grade level of race relations," says Ayo. She shared her "trickle-up theory of system

change from interpersonal relationships." Ayo gave us ten solutions to improve relationships and build a better world. The resulting presentation from "You can Fix Racism! Here's How" includes five things Whites and five things Blacks can do. Go to Youcanfixracism.com for more information.

You Can Fix Racism!

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- 1 ► ADMIT IT
- 2 ► LISTEN
- 3 ► EDUCATE YOURSELF
- 4 ► BROADEN YOUR EXPERIENCE
- 5 ► TAKE ACTION

5 STEPS ► PEOPLE OF COLOR

- 1 ► GET REAL
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Jett, John
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North End Connection
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Editor

Pete Tabberer

Staff

Deborah Eid
Executive Director
deid@crestongr.com

Mac Brown
Community Safety Organizer
mbrown@crestongr.com

Sue Capps
Executive Assistant
scapps@crestongr.com

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Glenn Disosway, *Vice President*
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Board meets the 4th Thursday of most months. 6:30 pm @ CNA offices.

The North End Connection

is a community newsletter published 4 times a year with a circulation of 1000 and is distributed in various local businesses. Advertising space is available. Contact our office for rate information.

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.

CNA is partially funded by the City of Grand Rapids Community Development Block Grant and Justice Assistance Grant Funded Programs.

Volunteer Opportunities at CNA

Volunteers are important to the Creston Neighborhood Association! If you would like to get involved, here are some areas where you can help.

YES! Count me in:

- ☐ **Communication Committee:** Promote the work of CNA through writing, photography, and graphic design.
- ☐ **Volunteer and Membership Committee:** Encourages participation in CNA.
- ☐ **Fundraising Committee:** Plans & implements events to sustain CNA services and programs
- ☐ **Living Green in Creston:** Promotes the environmental health of the Creston neighborhood

You may contact me at:

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Email Address: _____

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or contact CNA at 454-7900

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Email _____

- ☐ I wish to receive a newsletter and alerts electronically
- ☐ I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities

Please check any options that apply:

- ☐ I wish to pay annual resident membership dues of \$25 per household
- ☐ I wish to pay annual business membership dues of \$50 per non-profit or-
ganization or \$75 per for profit organization
- ☐ I wish to make a contribution of _____

Total Memberships and contributions enclosed _____

Please make 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
616-454-7900

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT NO. 4120

Change Service Requested

Community Calendar

Neighborhood Night Out
Tuesday, August 6,
4-7 pm @ Sweet St. Park

Cheshire Grill hosts Cruise Night for
CNA Wednesday, August 14, 5-8 pm
@Cheshire Grill

9th Annual Creston Car Show
Saturday, September 7,
11-3 pm @ Plainfield Ave. in the Creston
business district

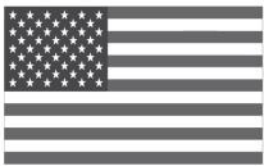
Living Green in Creston meeting
Thursday, August 15
(check Facebook for venue and any up-
dates)

Fruit tree planting event coming in the
fall, watch Facebook for details.

9th Annual

CRESTON CAR SHOW

Hosted by The Creston Business Association



Help Support Our Vets:
Join us for a cruise to
the Grand Rapids Home
for Veterans at 3pm. Bring
a new clothing or personal
item to donate at the Vets'
Home.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 7

Classics, Hot Rods, Antiques,
Muscle, Rare, Special Interest,
Customs, Motorcycles,
Imports & 4x4's

Check in 9:00 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Time: 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Place: 1560 Plainfield Ave
Grand Rapids, Michigan
(2 miles northeast of downtown)

Pie Eating Contest!
Held by RED JET CAFÉ to
benefit Creston Beautification.

Pre-register at:
thegilmorecollection.com/redjet.php

North End Connection

Summer 2013