



# North End Connection

The Newsletter of the Creston Neighborhood Association

Winter 2014

## Celebrating our local NBA Award winners

By: Laurie Williams

Have you discovered the secret of their success? The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Neighborhood Business Awards was held Thursday, November 7 at Wealthy Street Theatre. Sponsored by the Neighborhood Business Alliance and Neighborhood Ventures, this awards ceremony spotlights the city's 20 neighborhood business districts.

Every year we celebrate these districts and approximately 85 nominees for their tireless contribution to the overall economic success of Grand Rapids.

Mayor George Hartwell presented the prizes with his usual pride and humor.

Congratulations go out to our North Quarter nominees and winners:

- The Cheshire Grill WON "Best Neighborhood Restaurant"



Photo by: Meg Jewell

The owners of The Cheshire Grill are presented the Best Neighborhood Restaurant Award by Mayor George Hartwell at the Neighborhood Business Awards ceremony on November 7, 2013.

- Fifth Third Bank, nominated "Best Interior Renovation"
- Northfield Lanes, nominated "Best Exterior Maintenance"
- Dizzy Dog, nominated "Best New Business"
- Culver CPA Group, nominated "Best Window Display"

- Rezervoir Lounge, nominated "Good Neighbor"

A shout out to Shaun Biel, a former Vice President of the Creston Business Association, for being awarded the P. Michael Wanroy Volunteer in Business Award.

Shaun was honored for the time and energy he has devoted to advance the Monroe North Business District. We treasure him for his contribution in Creston.

"Two things really stood out in 2013," said Mark Lewis of Neighborhood Ventures.

"Business-district investment comes in all shapes and sizes, and every corridor in the city is ripe for new business opportunities."

Visit the North Quarter nominees and winners. Discover the secret of their success.



# Highlights from the CNA Annual Meeting

Photos by: Pete Tabberer

*Top Right:* Scott Coldwell was presented with the Public Safety Award by CNA Public Safety director Mac Brown and Police Captain Pete McWatters. Other award winners were:

- Tom Mort, Housing Code Compliance Volunteer
- Dwayne Culver, Tommy Allen Neighborhood Advocate Award
- Sue Capps, 15 years of CNA Service Appreciation



*Bottom Right:* An area resident makes suggestions for ways to improve the Creston Neighborhood. Suggestions included:

- Fewer empty buildings in the Plainfield Business District
- More outreach
- Cross country ski trails in Riverside Park
- More events, like school tours or a dog show
- A community art studio
- A new teen youth center
- New sewers

*Bottom Left:* Elections for CNA's board of directors were held at the annual meeting. Pictured are newly elected board members, from left to right, Amy Mitchell, Daniel Morse, Karen VanDyke and Alicia Coleman.



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# CNA partners with Wege Foundation

By: Deborah Eid

The Wege Foundation has long established itself as a primary philanthropic partner of green projects and educational initiatives in the Greater Grand Rapids area.

With a first time gift of \$30,000 from the Wege Foundation, CNA is pleased to begin a new initiative to provide service learning opportunities to City High School students over the next two years. This "Safe, Clean and Green" partnership will bring students to the business corridor where they will work on place making through mural painting and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). They will also assist in the evaluation of businesses' carbon footprints - where implementing changes in energy and materials consumption could bring measurable cost savings.

This project represents a natural extension of CNA's environmental work as well as our regular engagement with our neighborhood students of all ages. Over the last five years our community organizing has regularly engaged students from area schools. Briggs, Aberdeen and Creston High kids have partici-

pated in several playground builds.

In 2010-11 CNA was a client for the afterschool ACE mentoring program in the Engineering and Design club as students prepared and then presented their designs for the greening and beautification of a public space in the neighborhood.

The Robotics club from Creston's "GRAPCEP" has participated for the last four years in the September Creston Car Show. Student journalists from both City High and Creston wrote for our CNA Raptidian "hyperlocal media" neighborhood news bureau.

We will be seeking matching money for this project going forward and will be happy to accept your gifts designated for these kinds of community and service learning partnerships; increasing



our students' understanding of the importance of their contributions to making Creston an ever safer, cleaner and greener neighborhood.



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# My furnace adventure: Part two

By: Sharon Zils

*Editors Note: This is part two in a series about the Grand Rapids Housing Rehabilitation and Grant Program. Part one told of Sharon's broken furnace that led to her interest in the program. This installment talks about the application process.*

What can I say? Thanks to a new 99% efficiency furnace, vinyl replacement windows and a new insulated steel front door, the score now stands. Me: one. Winter: zero.

What a difference all these improvements to my 1920s built house have made from the previous decade of winters. My gas bills have been below \$100 per month, and I can keep my thermostat set at a comfortable 66-68 degrees. I won't have to endure that old, round dial thermostat that I never remembered to turn down. And I could never set it above 60-63 degrees because I couldn't afford the heat to keep it warmer.

However, as everyone knows by experience, TV shows or family lore, no home improvement project is ever without problems. Even the best formulated plans are subject to unforeseen complications and the contractor on my job was no exception. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's go back to the beginning of this process.

As was mentioned last issue, at the end of the article detailing the beginning of my furnace saga was this web address: [www.grcity.us/community-development/Pages/Housing-Rehabilitation-and-Grant-Program-Administration.aspx](http://www.grcity.us/community-development/Pages/Housing-Rehabilitation-and-Grant-Program-Administration.aspx). It was there I found out how and where to apply for this loan. Yes, sadly, it is a loan. Not "free" money. The application is long and detailed, but don't let that discourage you.

After my furnace failed on May 11 I had a heating/cooling contractor give me an estimate for replacement that was far more than I was able to afford. Besides death and taxes, the other sure thing for residents in Michigan is winter. Yes, it was only May, but in the summer months that were to follow, I knew that I wouldn't be able to save enough to have a new furnace in-

stalled in time and still stay current on monthly bills, plus eat...regularly.

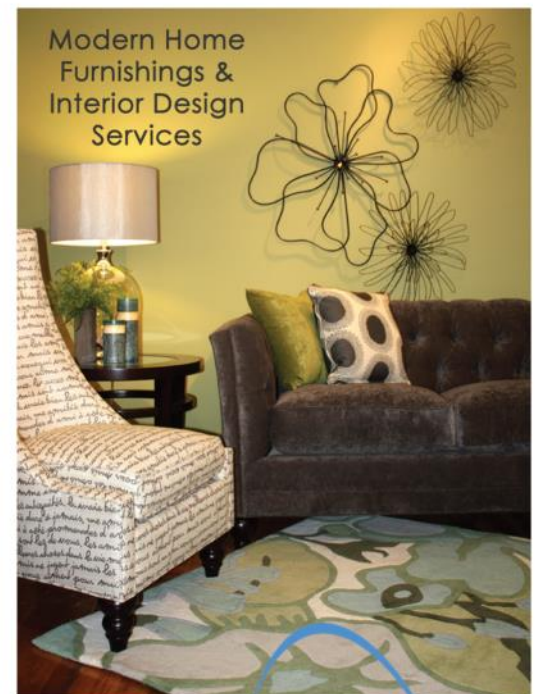
I've always done my own taxes, and the application process was no different. Just be careful to read everything. Two or three times, if necessary. And take this opportunity to organize your personal files. You know you've been putting it off for too long. If you miss something it will delay the processing of your application. Proof read what you write in the spaces. I submitted my application in person on May 30 of last year.

Then the wait began. I'm not a patient person. I want things done...yesterday! But that's not how things work in the real world. So I put the application out of my mind and concentrated on living, and being grateful that this fiasco hadn't happened in September.

The letter was dated June 21. My application had been approved. Hallelujah! Finally!! The rock is starting to roll. On July 2, Lisa and I had an appointment for her to inspect and discuss my needed repairs. Let the fun begin! Over the course of the next few months, Lisa and I became BFFs. She guided me through the long process and gave me invaluable advice.

See: Furnace, pg. 5

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# Public safety: Sweating the small stuff

By: Mac Brown

With the help of the many dedicated neighbors who call Creston home, we are able to deal with a wide array of public safety issues that arise in our neighborhood. This would not be possible without the strong partnership we have with our Community Officer Kristen Gibbons and the resources of the GRPD.

A big thanks to our outgoing police Chief Belk for recognizing the importance of a strong neighborhood/police partnership as priority to good crime prevention strategy. For the last year, crime has been very low for our city and neighborhood according to Lt. Mike Maycroft from GRPD's Crime Prevention Unit.

I have found that when there

is a lack of major crime, neighbors' foci tend to change to other personal or community endeavors, which is great!

However, it is still important to "sweat the small stuff" and draw from those tips and trainings we host to keep the small stuff small or nonexistent. The following are some online sources to keep you in the loop :

- crimemapping.com - every 24 hours the GRPD updates this website by sending out list of police reports made. You can be alerted to crimes that are of concern to you and be alerted via email as well.
- nextdoor.com - described as "Neighborhood Watch online", this is a great way to connect with neighbors and not only learn about the lat-

est suspicious activity on the block, but were the next great garage sale is going to be too.

- USAonWatch.org - a great source for Neighborhood Watch and Crime Prevention information provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Lastly, I would like to invite neighbors to join our Community Officer Kristen Gibbons and Housing Code Enforcement Officer Shelly Weiss 6pm on February 26th here at the CNA office. Both have unique roles within the GRPD and rely greatly on the community to achieve their goals. There will be a short presentation followed by a Q&A session. For more information or to RSVP, please contact me at mbrown@crestongr.com.

## Furnace, cont. from pg. 4

The next step in the process was a Lead Paint Risk Assessment/Inspection. That happened on July 18. It is contracted out to companies who specialize in that field. Mine was assigned to Analytical Testing & Consulting Services, Inc. out of Plainwell. And the tests were done by a very nice young man by the name of Nathan. It took most of an 8 hour work day, but it is well worth it.

Most homes and apartment buildings in Grand Rapids built before 1978 still have lead-based paint somewhere. It's an arduous process to permanently remove lead paint hazards but well worth it in the long run. The inspection showed that most of the lead paint in my home was exterior. I had decided to go for broke and get new replacement win-

dows in addition to the furnace. The new windows and the trim would cover most of the lead paint. So far, so good. The garage was an issue, so I was to have a new garage door too, I was so excited.

Finally, some of these looming, major home repairs would be done. And this all was possible because my furnace died.

Next issue,

you'll find out how the contractor is chosen, how long it takes to start and finish the job, how repayment of the loan happens and why I called Lisa my BFF.

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# Local History

By: Michael J. Page

St. Alphonsus Catholic Church is celebrating 125 years of Faith, Hope and Charity; serving the people of north-east Grand Rapids ... and beyond.

The early history of St. Alphonsus Church is filled with names that may be familiar to residents and former residents of Grand Rapids. Early contributors include family names such as: Clancy, Shanahan, Finn, Byrne, Calkins, Hanrahan, Jarecki, Maloney, McCormick, and many more that helped form the foundation of the vibrant, thriving parish community that we know today.

John Clancy was a wealthy businessman from Grand Rapids. In his 1884 will he bequeathed to

en to Rev. James Pulcher to be applied toward construction of a church.

The Bishop purchased undeveloped grounds in the north-east portion of Grand Rapids bordered by North Ave. on the east, Leonard St. on the south, Carrier St. on the north, and Coit Ave on the west.

On September 2, 1888 while the orphan asylum (later named St. John's Home) was still under construction, the newly formed parish of St. Alphonsus celebrated their first Mass there. However, this was a one time event, as the unfinished rooms were still open to the elements, proving them unacceptable for additional services, and arrangements were quickly made for other accommodations.

Patrick Finn promised the use of Finn's Hall for six months at no cost on Saturdays, Sundays and Holy Days. Mr. Finn also furnished a stove for heating and wood to fuel the stove.

The hall was located at 39 Plainfield Rd., just south of Leonard St. on the west side of the road,

next to the Baldwin House Hotel. The hall had been moved from 589 Ionia to the Plainfield location. Mr. Finn had purchased the structure in 1887 for \$125 from the Fourth Reformed Church. It was originally constructed as a



temporary meeting place for that congregation. After the building was moved, Mr. Finn named it Finn's Hall.

Across the road from Finn's Hall was the Parnell House Hotel, where Mr. Finn was the proprietor. The Parnell House Hotel also served as the residence for the Finn family. Within a short walk of the hotel was the Detroit, Grand Haven & Milwaukee Railroad depot. The depot ensured much train traffic, and the nearby commercial and residential areas flourished.

On September 15, 1888 ground was broken for a new building that would serve as St. Alphonsus School and as a temporary church. The school hall above the first-floor classrooms would serve as the temporary church for many years, until the new church was ready to be occupied.

The October 14, 1888 laying of the corner stone for the new school and temporary church was a huge event. A large parade, escorted by a police sergeant and platoon of policemen, was led by Maurice Shanahan, Grand Marshall. The parade featured two bands. A 10-piece band from the Knights of Labor led the first division. The second division was led by a 10-piece Polish Band. The parade included a 225 member delegation from the St. Alphonsus Association and repre-



Finn's Hall was located at 39 Plainfield. In 1888 it served as a temporary meeting place for the St. Alphonsus congregation. *St. Alphonsus Catholic Church Grand Rapids, MI 1914. Grand Rapids Public Library, 347-17.5).*

Bishop Henry Joseph Richter (the first Bishop of the Grand Rapids Diocese), a generous gift of \$60,000 for the purchase of "suitable grounds" for construction of an "orphan asylum." An additional sum of \$5,000 was giv-



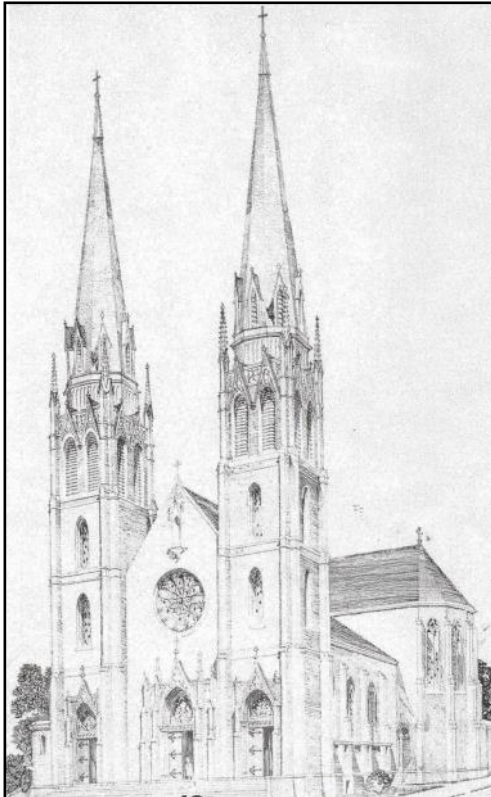
# St. Alphonsus celebrates 125 years

representatives from eleven other Catholic organizations, totaling 832 marchers.

The parade route started at the corner of Canal St. and E. Bridge St. (now Monroe Ave. and Michigan St.) and ended at the site of construction where 5,000 to 8,000 people had gathered.

The cornerstone was laid by Bishop Richter, assisted by Rev. Goldsmith and Maurice Shanahan, City Alderman and President of the City Council.

Everyone in attendance was given the opportunity to test whether the cornerstone was properly laid and would serve as a proper foundation for the parish.



A copy of the original architectural drawing of St. Alphonsus Church. The spires were ultimately not built due to budget constraints. *St. Alphonsus Church 1888-1988, Compiled by Jim*

## Why does St. Alphonsus Church front on Carrier Street instead of Leonard?

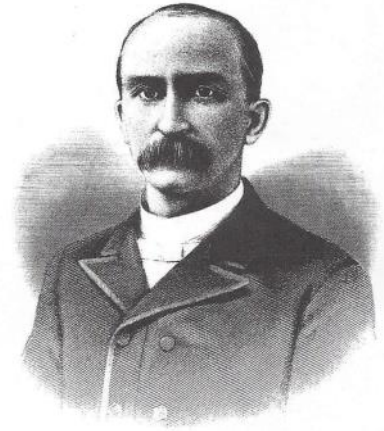
The original plans for St. Alphonsus Church had the front of the church on Leonard St. It was common for a major structure to front on a main street. However, the story goes that Maurice Shanahan, well known politician, respected business man, and major donor for the church's construction, said he wanted the church to face north in the direction of his house on the hill at Plainfield Rd. and Grove St. That way, he would see the beautiful front of the church when he looked out the windows of his home.

On May 6, 1906 an immense gathering witnessed the impressive ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone for the permanent St. Alphonsus Church.

"A lot of the men in the parish, after they were through working in the furniture factories, would come up here and work on the church. Most of them put in ten to twelve hours a day on their regular jobs, then they'd work until dark helping the carpenters and bricklayers. My parents were always very proud of that."

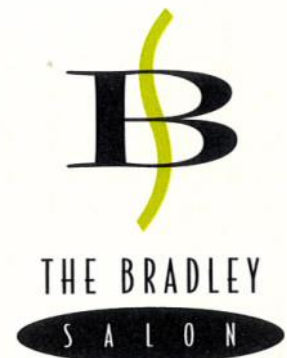
On December 22, 1909 the new church was consecrated with a 6 A.M. service conducted by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Richter. Several other priests assisted. It was a joyous day for the people of St. Alphonsus parish.

The 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration includes a Parish Mission on February 15 – 19, a Spiritual Celebration on April 27 – 29, and a Mass & All Parish Reunion of Alumni and Priests on August 1 – 3, 2014. For more details go to: [stalphonsusgr.org](http://stalphonsusgr.org)



Legend states that it was due to the influence of local businessman Maurice Shanahan (pictured above) that St. Alphonsus Church faces Carrier Street instead of Leonard. *The History of Grand Rapids* by Albert Baxter,

Congratulations to the St. Alphonsus Parish Community. As you embrace your tradition, your faith and your future, we wish you many more years of serving God through service to the people of Grand Rapids.



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# Smoke alarms are always in season

By: Sharon Zils

Shortly after you read about the city program offering free smoke detectors and installation that I wrote several issues ago, an incident occurred in my kitchen.

I was going to make toasted cheese sandwiches for dinner. I put the griddle on the burner of the gas stove to heat it to the correct temperature.

Of course, being the impatient, type-A person that I am, I wasn't going to stand there watching it heat up. I figured that I had just enough time to run to the recycle bin out by the garage. And I would've had enough time to run back and forth if I wouldn't have heard a noise in the neighbor's garage. Isn't it always something? An excuse that at the time seems important, but needless to say it delayed me as I had to investigate.

It was nothing to speak of and by the time I was going back up the sidewalk to the door, I heard

a loud, whiny alarm. Immediately, I assumed it was one of those annoying car alarms the next street over. But no. As I opened the back door, I saw dark grey rolling smoke and from the dining room I heard the unmistakable sound of my newly installed smoke alarm! OMG! I grabbed a pot holder, wrapped it around the handle of the pan and ran it out the door to the cement patio!!

As I was clearing the downstairs of smoke while the alarm was still blaring, I thought about the stats that I quoted in the article: most residential fires occur in the kitchen while people are cooking dinner during that infamous hour of 6-7 pm. I looked at the clock: 6:25pm. Boy, did I feel stupid, yet I was so glad that I took the time to schedule that installation. Have you?

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Capps, Larry & Sue  
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Carey, Corinne  
Castanon, Rafael & Milinda  
Coldwell, Scott  
Coleman, Alicia  
Coles, Richard & Sally  
DeBoer, Nancy & Pete  
DeLuca, Jolene  
Despres, David & Helene  
Dieleman, Jim and Arliss  
Dunn, Charleen  
Edmonds, Elaine  
Ensley, Diane & John  
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Hansen, Joette

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VanOort, Robert  
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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

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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

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PERMIT NO. 4120

**Change Service Requested**

**Community Calendar**

Q&A with police and housing officers  
Wednesday, February 26  
6 pm @ CNA Offices (205 Carrier)

Annual Town Hall with Pancakes  
Saturday, March 15  
8:30-11 am @ 2nd Congregational  
Church (525 Cheshire)

Interested in Child Watch? Learn more  
at our Annual Spring Training and  
Block Rep Appreciation Dinner in April -  
For details contact  
[mbrown@crestongr.com](mailto:mbrown@crestongr.com)

CNA Board meets the 4th Thursday of most  
months - Check our website and like the  
Creston Neighborhood Association on Face-  
book for updates !

**Winter 2014**

hello  
neighbor  
event /  
pancake  
breakfast

**Saturday, March 15**  
**8:30-11 am**  
**2nd Congregational Church**

**North End Connection**