

OH Journal

The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

December 2009

Riverview Park Community Center Update

BY GLENN E. MILLER

The City's project involves construction of an artificial turf soccer field, a proposed community center building, and parking in Riverview Park at the former dump site along Mairdale Street. Headed by Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, Councilwoman Darlene Harris, Representative Don Walko, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of City Planning, the City has set a high priority on utilizing community input. Representatives of the four adjacent communities have been designated and are working with the City to help guide the design of the facility. Soccer field construction will be the first phase.

The second meeting between the community Working Group and the City took place on Thursday, October 8, 2009 at the Riverview Park Visitor's Center. Project progress was discussed and next steps determined. In addition to the representatives of the four neighborhood groups, in attendance were Duane Ashley (Parks and Recreation), Christie Berger (Mayor's Office), Andrew Dash (Dept. of City Planning), Kim Graziani (Mayor's Office), and Jim Sauer (JT Sauer & Associates).

Jim Sauer presented the athletic field design draft. The current design reflects a soccer only field with a walking track, but it was decided that Jim would report back to the group with an updated design showing a larger field (size of football field), with a walking track surrounding it. He will determine the impact into the existing site and work and update the cost estimate. Much of the group was supportive of making it the size of a football field, but only making it as a soccer field. The group reviewed differences between turf samples, and asked that the parking lot utilize natural storm water management. The City is planning on making improvements to the sidewalk along Mairdale to allow residents to walk to the field, tying into the existing trails, to allow access to the field.

Lighting funds have been secured for along Mairdale Street, but athletic field lighting is still to be determined due to the potential impact upon the existing residences. This issue is still open and will be discussed at an upcoming community meeting this November. The next steps involve the Working Group reviewing the updated design, and then the community meeting took place in early December to present the current design and get feedback. The project is still on track for start of construction in spring 2010.

New Tech Tools Keep the Neighborhood Connected

BY ROXANNE TUNISTRA

Observatory Hill, Inc. is using technology to improve communication to our neighbors. Our Facebook connection became a discussion site for the new dog park at Riverview Park and community clean up projects. There are many other things that can be done on this site, like block watches, and updates on the new soccer field! All we need is YOU! So sign up for your account on-line and start meeting your neighbors. We are working on creating the option for members to receive our newsletter via e-mail to become a more green organization in this digital world! Currently, a sampling of our newsletters are available on our website at <http://www.observatoryhill.net/>.

The Calendar of Events comes monthly to your e-mail inbox, full of activities in our neighborhood for you and your family to enjoy: Just contact ohjournal@gmail.com to have your name added to the e-mail list so you won't be left out!



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District 1 News

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District 1 News from Councilwoman Darlene M. Harris

Absolutely a top concern is violence. There is never a place for gun violence, really never a place for any violence, and the loss of our children – as victims and as perpetrators – is unconscionable. I remain behind any and all efforts to curb violence. We do not have any children to spare. We cannot keep losing people to senseless violence.

Meanwhile, the news of Allegheny Commons Park, specifically East Park, is noteworthy. Duquesne Light Company has a vault under the ground, with manhole covers over it, near the entryway on Cedar Avenue. The company brought a plan to the neighborhood which has developed over the last few months into a project that would locate a metal monolith – 28 feet by 9 feet by 9 feet – directly in that gateway entrance to the park.

We have gathered representatives from various departments in City government, and are now working through our law department alongside the communities of the North Side, to arrive at a satisfactory resolution to this matter. I have posted documentation to my City webpage.

In happier news, we are continuing work on the popular dog run near the tennis courts, beyond the Observatory. The fencing now better holds smaller pets, and we are looking forward to such improvements as a water fountain.



Also in Riverview Park, we are working with the Mayor and Citiparks on a plan for a Soccer Field and Recreation Center. This project will be bringing additional soccer space and a multipurpose recreation center to the community on the edge of Riverview Park, below the Perry Academy Gym Annex on Maridale. We will have a series of meetings and continue planning with residents and neighborhood representatives, toward construction this spring.

We received quite a bit of press recently for my latest initiative: recycling asphalt. A few national publications have mentioned our interest in the process. There is more information about it on my website. The sooner we buy it, the sooner we begin saving money. There is no room for detail here, but this is a win-win prospect. The City saves millions of taxpayer dollars, we reduce our carbon footprint by around 80%, the work is done by City workers rather than contractors (so the money and jobs remain in the city), and we reuse what we already have. We would save money, help the environment, and repave more roads right away.

Councilwoman Darlene M. Harris can be reached at 412-255-2135, or by email through her city web page, <http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/district1/>.

Do You Remember?

BY PEG PERLIK & LORRAINE SCHWARTZ

Do you remember hearing the paperboy finishing his deliveries when you got up, and it was still dark? Dad read his newspaper after he came home from work every evening. The newspaper was a very important way to staying up to date in those days.

Remember that some kids got up early every day so they could go to Mass before school? On Friday we stopped at the corner bakery and bought 4 glazed donuts for a nickel and brought them back to class for breakfast after communion. Other days we ate our breakfast at home.

Do you remember when the Clark Company created the Zagnut candy bar? There was a shortage of chocolate and the government wanted to supply as much chocolate as possible to the men and women in the armed forces during World War II.

Do you remember when some kids got coal in their stockings at Christmas? Were you one of those kids?

Please send ideas to Peg Perlik, OHI Journal, 3036 Norwood Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15214.

Are You Considering Buying A Home in Observatory Hill?

BY DORRIE SMITH-RICHIE, HOUSING CHAIR FOR OHI

Buying a home is a huge decision, one that takes diligent planning and careful thought. Purchasing a home is the single largest investment most people will ever make in their lifetime. To help guide you through this process, ask yourself:

- Why do you want to buy?
- What do you want? (kind of home, neighborhood, schools, accessibility.)
- Do you have the money? (purchase price, closing costs)

If you are a first time buyer, there is good news. The \$8000.00 Tax Credit has been extended to April 30, 2010. Eligibility of the credit is on either new or existing homes. The tax credit is equal 10 percent of the purchase price, up to \$8000. See www.federalhousingtaxcredit.com

Learn to shop around to different mortgage lenders for the best rate. Get yourself “pre-approved”, a pre-approved buyer is taken more serious by sellers when it comes to putting in an offer on a home.

The URA and Dollar Bank offer Pittsburgh Home Ownership Programs (PHOP). URA also offers grants up to \$3000 towards down payment and closing costs to eligible buyers. For more info on this and other programs please contact: Bonnie Booth at Dollar Bank (412) 261-8018 or URA at (412) 255-6677. Other community banks can also provide assistance. For information about homes for sale in Observatory Hill, go to www.realtor.com, and www.FSBO.com or contact your local realtor. Until next issue...Happy House Hunting!

New Board Members Bring Varied Interest and Talents to Community Service



Mia Crow has lived in the community for more than eight years. With her three sons, Mia lives on Perrysville Avenue. Over the past several years, she has been active as a child-care specialist, mentor and writer. She brings her sense of caring and strong interest in teaching writing to the neighborhood. Mia holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Chatham

University, and plans to stay involved with OHI as a writer, a parent and neighbor interested in seeing that all children learn to express themselves well. She says "writing is my passion" and wants neighborhood children to gain more opportunities in writing for life-long success.



Jasun Stanton has been a resident of Observatory Hill since July 1998 when he purchased what was advertised as a "handyman's special" on Watson Boulevard. He has been working on the house since he moved in, completely renovating and restoring it back to its original charm and splendor. The home was even featured on the OHI House Tour in 2003. Through his

renovation efforts, he has become very familiar with the neighborhood and realizes the importance of solid community.

Jasun graduated from Youngstown State University with a Bachelors of Engineering degree in Civil Engineering. He is a Manager of Field Operations at Pennsylvania American Water Company in the south hills. Jasun, Barbara and their three boys - Jack, Ian and Evan - live in the home he renovated on Watson.



Roxanne Tuinstra has been a volunteer with OHI for five years, most recently managing OHI's Facebook site, membership database, and disseminating information about Observatory Hill community events to our membership via e-mail.

Roxanne is married to Tim whom she met 12 years ago on a blind date orchestrated by her aunt who lives here in Pittsburgh, and they've been married now for eight years. They have three children, ages two, three and 5. In her spare time, Roxanne watches loads of reality television; knits long straight things that she passes out as gifts; writes fictional stories that may never see the light of day; and tends to her urban garden that this past summer, produced a bumper crop of cherry tomatoes!

Roxanne would like to grow community participation and awareness of Observatory Hill during her tenure on the board.

Community Outreach and Family Programming in Observatory Hill

BY JANE SESTRIC & MIA CROW

Life in Observatory Hill is family centered. Each spring and fall OHI brings special events such as Riverview Heritage Days and Fall Festivals to the community. But every day we provide referral services through board members with knowledge about their community. One colorful project of the park volunteers is the 'flowering up' project which brings youth and families to the park in May. This project, funded with help from Councilwoman Darlene Harris, adds gardens throughout the park to be enjoyed by runners, bikers and families all summer long.

Neighbors and friends are welcome to stop in at the Visitor and Education Center to learn more about the trails, orienteering, wilderness survival and urban gardening. Moses Carper operates the Chiyou Coral, an outreach program that gives young people an opportunity to learn about self-reliance through horse back riding and equestrian programs. Now he welcomes neighbors at the Visitor and Education Center that includes a library of books about nature studies and about the history of Riverview Park. For details, call the Visitor and Education Center, 412-321-4107.

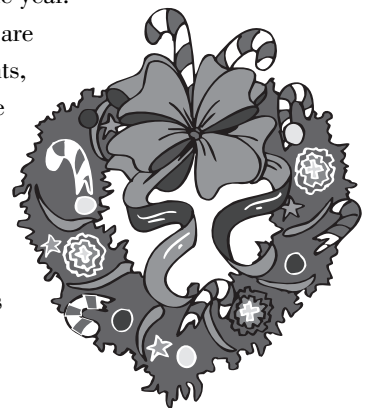
Currently OHI is searching for interested parents and neighbors to form a committee for youth. If you are interested in joining the group to seek services such as better educational opportunities, after school tutoring, and nature studies, please call Moses Carper at 412-583-5290 or leave a message for the Board at 412-231-2887.

Holiday Greetings!

Board members and friends of Observatory Hill, Inc. extend warm holiday wishes to you and your family. We appreciate your participation in events, community informational meetings and family programming throughout the year.

Without the many volunteers who are generous with their time and talents, our organization would not be able to serve the neighbors of Observatory Hill and beyond.

Happy Holidays to our friends in Observatory Hill, the Northside and City of Pittsburgh, and wishes for good fortune in 2010!



Church Sponsored Outreach Programs

Education and Recreation to Serve Local Families

Incarnation of the Lord Parish: Food bank available every other Wednesday; please call the Church Office for registration details: 412-931-2911. The "Soul and Inspiration Choir" performs with "Wee Jams" at St. Mary's Church in downtown Pittsburgh on December 20th from 2-4. Ladies of Charity and health initiatives such as "Taking Off Pounds Sensibly", [meets on Tuesday evening] provide services that keep the community feeling fine.

Pittsburgh City Outreach, formed to serve people in need through the love and power of Jesus Christ. The church sponsors Friday evening adult services and Sunday services that include Kidz Crusade meetings for children in grades K-5. For information on upcoming programs and church events, contact Pastor Brian Bolt at 321-3442

Riverview United Presbyterian Church hosts a kids club, 'Giggle' each Tuesday from 4:45 to 6pm. Youth Group meets the third Sunday of the month from 6 to 8 pm, and is open to students in Middle School and High School. The Food Bank is open each Tuesday from 3 to 4:30, and the Thrift Store on Perrysville Avenue is open from 10 to 2pm on Tuesday and Thursday and from 10 to noon on Saturday. This year the choir is preparing a Christmas Cantata on December 20th at 11:00; Christmas Eve services: interactive Children's Service at 5:30 ~ Candle light service at 7:30. All welcome.

Rose of Sharon Church offers Movie Night, 'Saving our City' Sunday mornings and Weds. at 7 to discuss poverty, violence, and other issues, and 'Basketball and Salvation Message for Youth. 'Activities for YOU' give the young generation and older generation time to get together to listen, learn, aide and advise each other. Activities for YOU is an outlet for people to add value to their lives by adding value to the lives of others.

Seventh Day Adventist Church Each Christmas families from the church donate cookies for residents of Lydia's Place, housing for children who have parents who are inmates in the County Jail, as well as food collections neighboring communities. Special holiday service involving the entire church community is set for Dec. 20th. @ 11a.m.

The OHI Board

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412-583-5290

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Vice President
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Mia Crow
412-352-8877

Jasun Stanton
412-323-2531

Roxanne Tuinstra
Technology
412-931-6013

Richard and Jane Sestric
Emeritus Board Members,
Newsletter
412-231-8134

Annual Registration Form for Membership to Observatory Hill Inc.

Mail to: Observatory Hill Inc.
P.O. Box 99204, Pittsburgh, PA 15233
412-231-2887

Member's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Date Paid _____

E-mail address _____

Membership Contribution: (check one)

___ \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$15 ___ Other ___ \$50 (Business Member)

___ Please include me on the email list that provides information on local activities and important community notices.

___ Do not include me on any email notifications

Make Checks Payable to: Observatory Hill Inc.

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