

OH Journal



The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

December 2002

Northside Lighting Plan

By Georgia Petropoulos

The Northside Leadership Conference (NSLC) and Northside City Shops are working with Councilwoman Barbara Burns to add new decorative street lighting in five Northside business districts. The Northside Wide Business District Lighting project will focus on lighting improvements in the following five primary business district areas: Brighton Heights, Brightwood (Marshall-Shadeland), East Allegheny, Observatory Hill and Troy Hill.

The long-term goal of the Lighting Project is to beautify our commercial streetscape and encourage the creation of economically viable, architecturally attractive and pedestrian friendly business districts in our neighborhoods. At this time, the addition of new pedestrian scaled light poles is being recommended for the Perrysville Avenue commercial corridor in Observatory Hill. In addition, the design also proposes replacing the utility arm and light fixture on the existing wood poles with a more decorative "tear drop" fixture.

The project is currently being managed under the direction of Ms. Georgia Petropoulos of the Northside Leadership Conference and the lead consultant for the project is the architectural firm of Pfaffmann + Associates. Funding to undertake this project has been secured from Councilwoman Barbara Burns, Mayor Tom Murphy, the NSLC and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.

For more information, contact City Shops at 412.231.4714.



Perrysville Avenue

OHI Begins with Rich Sestric

By Barbara Pace

This is the first in a series of articles covering the history of Observatory Hill, Inc. and its Board members. It's only fitting that we begin with one of the industrious, altruistic originators of our grass-roots community group, Richard Sestric.

OHI in the Beginning

Since its annexation to the city of Pittsburgh in 1907, the Observatory Hill district has expanded and developed to become home to nearly 14,000 residents. The community continues to grow and evolve through the efforts of neighbors and Observatory Hill, Inc., the local community-based organization.

The organization originated in 1982 when the Sestrics' and neighbors from Richey and Dunlap Streets formed a grass-roots block group called "Preservation North" with the motto: "Community Growth Through Preservation." Some of the original members of Preservation North included Rich Sestric, Mary Jane Berry, Edward Ward and Andy Balint. The group, who met in their homes, directed their energies towards preservation, safety and revitalization of the residential and business district.

A few years later, as the group expanded to include more members and volunteer opportunities, such as participation in Neighbor Fair and the Riverview Park Renaissance Committee, the name of the neighborhood was changed to Observatory Hill. This change was designed to reinforce the location of the neighborhood near Riverview Park where the Observatory stands and to stress its historical character.

Rich Sestric's Contributions

Rich Sestric had served as President for Observatory Hill, Inc. for several years. During this time, OHI planned holiday church tours, promoted neighborhood housing and commercial development, and participated in Northside Conference and Northside Public Safety Committee programs. Improvements at Perry High School, the Observatory Hill Commercial District and Riverview Park have also been projects of great importance to Rich and OHI neighbors during the past two decades.

Rich continues to be an active member of the board, who is constantly seeking new members. He works on community initiatives such as housing revitalization, historic preservation efforts, and networking with Northside organizations for community development and preservation.

Rich, one of ten children in the family of Mary and George Sestric, was raised on Peralta Street in the Northside. After his teenage education with Connelly Vocational, which specialized in electrical wiring and power, Rich served with the Expeditionary Force in the countries of Lebanon and Germany from 1956 to 1959. Returning to the states, he pursued a degree in Behavioral Science from Point Park College. Upon graduation, Rich took his newly developed skills (via the Peace Corps) to help the local residents of Columbia, South America develop a community business plan. In 1967, Rich entered the "Special Forces" and retired as a Master Sargent in 1992.

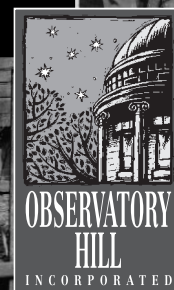
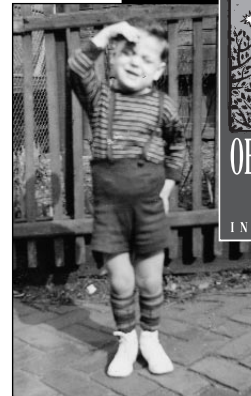
In 1994, Rich graduated from Pitt's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs with a Master's Degree in Public Administration. For the last several years, Rich has worked in retail sales, but has continued to devote considerable time and energy to his volunteer work in community development for the Observatory Hill neighborhood.

Rich's diverse background includes working with Community Action Pittsburgh, Assistant Administrator for the Squirrel Hill Jewish Home and Hospital, and a decade as Supervisor of Special Events at The Carnegie in Oakland.

Rich and his wife, Jane, who is a librarian for North Hills School District, have been married for over thirty years and have four beautiful daughters.



OHI is beginning research to locate all its former members. If someone in the community has any information or photos of the people who were the catalyst for OHI, if you were helped by the group, or have memories you would like to share, please call our office, or better yet - submit your own story!



AdultBasic Program Still Has Openings

State Rep. Don Walko Reports
from Harrisburg

Uninsured adults in Pennsylvania should consider applying for the state's adult health insurance plan, AdultBasic. The program provides health coverage for \$30 per month for adults who do not have health insurance and who are not eligible for Medicaid.

A person qualifies for the program if he or she:

- Is age 19 to 64
- Meets income guidelines based upon family size
- Is not covered by any other health insurance, including Medicare or Medicaid
- Lacks prior coverage under any other insurance plan for 90 days prior to enrollment, except for a person (and their spouse) who has been laid off his/her job
- Has been a resident of Pennsylvania for at least 90 days

Benefits that are available with AdultBasic insurance include:

- Physician and Specialist services
- Inpatient hospital care
- Emergency room care
- Diagnostic and testing services

Applications are available:

At my office or by calling the program's Help line toll-free at 1-800-GO-BASIC. You can also apply online at www.state.pa.us. Type "AdultBasic" in the "PA Keyword" box.

Tips for applying:

- Be sure to include all of the information requested on the application form.
- Print or write neatly with an ink pen.
- Attach at least one proof of income, such as pay stub, statement from employer, letter of unemployment compensation award, or, if self-employed, a copy of a quarterly IRS statement or annual filing from the prior year.
- Be sure to sign and date the application!

If you would like more information on the above or any other state-related issue please contact one of my district offices.



Don Walko
Pennsylvania State Rep.
Northside Office
3880 Perrysville Avenue
Observatory Hill
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
Phone: 412-321-5523
Lawrenceville Office
204 37th Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
Phone: 412-621-2818
(Hours by appointment)

The Commodore Insight at Perry High School

By Aaron Lotis

Perry Traditional Academy has many academic advantages and opportunities that other high schools simply don't have. Perry graduates attend some of the finest post high school institutions in the country and its graduates become leaders in all facets of society.

Perry is a math and science magnet that offers high level and creative math and science classes that prepare students for higher level learning and career opportunities in this highly competitive field. Perry also offers the Pittsburgh Scholars Program (PSP), which is an accelerated academic program for college bound students. The Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) program is specially designed to meet the unique needs of the over 150 gifted students at the high school.

Perry students have the opportunity to obtain college credits in a variety of ways. They can take courses at local universities, such as University of Pittsburgh and Robert Morris University, or they can take Advanced Placement (AP) classes at the high school. These credits, mixed with the programs at the University of Pittsburgh and Robert Morris, give students the opportunity to further their education beyond the high school level and help save them thousands of dollars in tuition costs.

In January, Perry Traditional Academy will be serving as the host of the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils Annual Mini-conference. Over 200 delegates from 30 different schools from the western Pennsylvania area will be attending this prestigious event. Perry is the first city high school in the past ten years to host this event.

Other activities offered at the high school include, Bot-ball (Robotics competition), Nova Net (a program where students make up courses online), The National History Day and Think-a-thon competitions, Tapestry of the Arts, Career Awareness Day, and many others.

Aaron Lotis, who is from Carrick, attends Perry Traditional Academy and graduates in 2003. He is a defensive lineman for the high school's undefeated football team and a pitcher for the baseball team. After high school, he plans to pursue a career in the Air Force as an Astronomical Engineer.



Citiparks Offers Plenty To Do This Winter

By Mary Beth Mueller

Schenley Park Ice Skating Rink is Open

Family skate nights continue Thursdays 7 - 9 pm. One youth is admitted free with each paid adult admission but must be accompanied by an adult. College I.D. Nights are Tuesdays 9:30 - 11:30 pm, Wednesday 1:30 - 3:30 pm and Sundays 7 - 9 pm; admission is \$2.50 with a valid college I.D. Adult admission is \$3.50; youths 18 and under, and seniors 60 and older are \$2.50. Skate rental is \$2. *For more information, call 412-422-6547.*

16th Annual Mascot Skate

On January 18, 2003, from 1:30 - 3:30 pm, meet and greet more than 35 of Pittsburgh's favorite mascots as they take to the ice at the Schenley Ice Skating Rink. Be sure to bring along a camera or camcorder.

West Penn Skateboarding Park is Open

On Thursday, November 7, Mayor Murphy cut the ribbon to officially open Citiparks' newest skate park. Experienced skaters - as well as novices - will enjoy this new facility located in Polish Hill. It becomes Citiparks' second skate park, joining the existing facility in McKinley Park in Beltzhoover.

Winter Recreation Center Programs

Programs continue throughout the year at Citiparks' 18 recreation centers. Recreation centers offer an opportunity to discover the best that Citiparks has to offer with activities ranging from basketball and gymnastics to chess club and ceramics. Most centers are open weekdays from 2 - 10 pm and Saturdays from 9 am - 2 pm. *For more information, call 412-422-6543.*

Indoor Swimming at Oliver Bath House

Although Citiparks' outdoor pools are closed for the season, swimmers of all ages can enjoy indoor facilities at the Oliver Bath House on the South Side. Aquatics programs include adult swim, health & fitness swim, open swim, infant/preschool aquatics, children's learn to swim, family swim and water aerobics. *For more information, call 412-488-8380.*

To learn more about Citiparks' various programs call Citiparks at 412-255-2539 or log on to www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/parks.

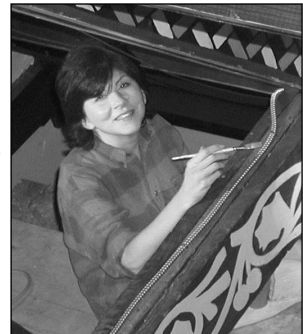


Incarnation of the Lord Parish is Open!

By Lynn Schraf

The devastation of an electrical fire on May 19, 2002, did not stop the parishioners of Incarnation of the Lord Parish. The fire destroyed the altar but, luckily, did not spread to the rest of the structure. Smoke from the fire permeated every surface of the building and work has been underway since then to clean up and update. Church services have been held in the parish school, Incarnation Academy's cafeteria.

The scheduled reopening of the Church is December 22, 2002 with Bishop Wuerl dedicating the new altar at the 11 am mass. All are welcome to attend this special occasion.



Volunteer, Elaine Fatla works on the trim work high above the church sanctuary.

Incarnation of the Lord Parish
Father John Bachkay
4071 Franklin Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
412 931-2911

OHI Housing Initiative Update

By Leanne Onorato

Observatory Hill Incorporated (OHI) has recently launched the construction phase of their first housing development project. Construction began in early September on the Marshall Avenue homes. Although exterior work has not yet commenced, the interiors of the homes have been fully gutted and are now being framed.

The next step will be to focus on the rehab units along Perrysville Avenue. The new construction on Perrysville Avenue is slated for springtime.



Councilwoman Burns Legislative Report

November was budget month at Pittsburgh City Council. In addition to regular legislative activity, City Council reviewed the operating and capital budgets proposed by Mayor Murphy. I am pleased to note that among other important initiatives, funding for a Northside Soccer field has been proposed. The budget also included funding to under take a public street lighting project in 5 major commercial districts including Brighton Heights, Troy Hill, Brightwood, Observatory Hill and East Allegheny.

The City is working to improve the overall system for collecting bulk items and hopes that these changes will be evident by the end of 2002. In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact the Mayors Service Center at 412-255-2621 or my office to alert us to on-going problems with pick up of your materials.

Because winter is almost upon us, city residents should be aware of the city ordinance regarding snow removal. The ordinance indicates that every tenant, occupant or owner having any land or building frontage on any street in the city where there is a sidewalk of concrete, brick or stone shall remove any snow, sleet or ice within 24 hours.

Residents will be pleased to learn that the vacant apartment building on the corner of Watson & Perrysville Avenues will be demolished under a city contract later this month and a new owner occupied housing development will be forthcoming. Observatory Hill Inc. volunteers have worked for over 10 years to recreate this corner and I would like to recognize their leadership and commitment for not only removing blighted property but also having the vision and commitment to rebuild our City.

Please feel free to call my office staff Lynn Bonenberger or Nancy Schaefer at 255-2135 with questions or concerns.



Barbara Burns
Observatory Hill's City
Council Representative
Office Phone: 412-255-2135

Calendar

January

OHI Board Meeting

Third Wednesday of every month
7:00 p.m.
Byzantine Seminary

Riverview Park Alliance Meeting

Fourth Thursday of every month
6:30 p.m.

Northside Leadership Conference Meeting

First Wednesday of every month
6:00 p.m.

16th Annual Mascot Skate

1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Schenley Park

February

Family Swim Nights will resume

Perry Traditional Academy

April

Earth Day

April 26, 2003
Riverview Park

May

OHI Annual House Tour

May 18, 2002

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Looking for Volunteers

PPC at Work on Riverview Park Map

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) is working on a map of Riverview Park and is looking for volunteers to walk the trails, determine distances and make corrections to the map. Earlier this year the PPC published a detailed map of Schenley Park with photos and information on park amenities. It is being sold at the Schenley Park Visitor Center and local bookstores. A map of Frick Park is nearing completion.

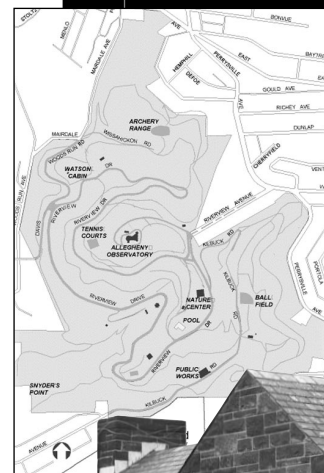
"We are eager to involve the Observatory Hill / Riverview Park Community in this project because they know the trails so well," says Meg Cheever, president of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

For more information or a copy of the map, contact Abbie Pauley, director of public education and programs for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy at 412-682-7275.

PPC Looking for Volunteers to Monitor Riverview Sites

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is looking for volunteers to monitor three restoration sites in Riverview Park. Last year, the Conservancy began restoring three slopes in the park, which included stabilizing the steep incline to prevent erosion and replanting with native species. Now the nonprofit organization is looking for volunteers to visit the sites four times a year, remove invasive species and record plant health. Training will be provided by the PPC.

For more information call the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy at 412-682-7275.



Annual Registration Form for Membership to Observatory Hill Inc.

Mail to: Observatory Hill Inc.
P.O. Box 7651, Pittsburgh, PA 15214
412-231-2887

Members Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Date Paid _____

e-mail address _____

Interests _____

Annual Membership Dues (check one)

☐ Community Member - \$5.00/household (adults over 18)

☐ Business Member - \$50.00

Make Checks Payable to: Observatory Hill Inc.

About OHI

Observatory Hill, Inc. serves our neighborhood as a member of the Northside Leadership Conference. Call one of the Officers if you'd like more information or to get involved in your community. There are open board meetings the third Wednesday of every month at the Byzantine Seminary at 3605 Perrysville Avenue at 7:00 PM. All are welcome to listen and participate!

The OHI Board

Susan Rooney
President.....412-323-0899
Scott Pipitone
Vice President.....412-321-7155
Brian Pinter
Secretary.....412-323-8868
Dave Gilbreath
Treasurer.....412-321-5043

Moses Carper412-583-5790
Brian Chapman.....n/a
Malcolm Hardyn/a
Skip McCrea412-231-3750
Quynh McGuire412-321-5595
Barbara Pace.....412-231-4379
Lynn Schraf.....412-321-5043
Richard Sestric412-231-8134
Brian Vidien/a

Committees

House Tour

Entire Board

Neighborhood & Business Development

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Richard Sestric
Dave Gilbreath
Barbara Glynn

Public Safety

Susan Rooney*

Parks

Barbara Pace*
Barbara Glynn

Membership

Rich Sestric*
Susan Rooney
Barbara Pace

Nominating

Entire Board

Newsletter

Barbara Pace*
Brian Pinter
Scott Pipitone
Rich Sestric

Entertainment

Brian Pinter*
Quynh McGuire
Susan Rooney

North Side Leadership Conference (NSLC]

Scott Pipitone*
Richard Sestric

Housing

Lynn Schraf*
Quynh McGuire
Barbara Pace
Dave Gilbreath
Barbara Glynn
Mark Reisman
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Denise Colbert
Stacey Regan

*(Chairperson)

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