

# OH Journal

The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

July 2005

## Observatory Hill House Tour

TIM TUINSTRA

Hundreds of eager people from Pittsburgh and beyond visited fourteen homes in Observatory Hill on Sunday, May 22 between 1 and 5 p.m. Spanning more than a century in dates of construction, the houses represented a wide array of styles, looks, and construction.

Homeowners, a developer, and Observatory Hill Inc. opened these homes on a mostly sunny, cool day for the 2005 Observatory Hill House Tour. Several generous sponsors funded the return of the tour, which was not held in 2004.

Tour participants began with the sign-up tables in front of Riverview Presbyterian Church at Perrysville Avenue and Riverview Park Drive. Trolleys whisked them away to the homes, which were located from Marshall Avenue in the south all the way to the northern reaches of the city on Waldorf Street.

Visitors toured homes on Perrysville Avenue, Waldorf Street, Marshall Road,

Watson Boulevard, and Richey Avenue. Some have been owned by the same people for many years. Others belonged to newer homeowners. A few were for sale or rent. Each lent a distinct flair to the tour.

Styles ranged from classic Victorian mansions to a Craftsman-style bungalow. Some were built in the 1800s, while a few were built just within the past year. Together, all of the homes featured on the tour highlighted the wonderful variety of houses and yards available in Observatory Hill.



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## Observatory Hill House Tour: *Continued from page 1*

From decades-long residents to first-time visitors, those taking the house tour gained new appreciation for this unique North Side neighborhood.

Observatory Hill Inc. appreciated the tour's volunteers and sponsors, especially Coldwell Banker, Dollar Bank, National City Bank and PNC. Special thanks went to participating homeowners:

Glenn and Dorothy Baggeley, Bill and Maggie Oberst, OHI Project Homes, Joseph and Kim Ehman, Mark Masterson Properties, Tom and Maureen Uhler, Joachim and Annette Ahner, Frank and

❧

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❧

Rebecca McGary, David and Laura Stevens, Carl and Martha Berdnik, John and Elaine Wilson, James and Stephanie Lichauer, and Steve Mole.



*Kara Dragone*

## Observatory Hill Student Wins Crest \$cholarship

BARB STANTON

It's that time when high school seniors have graduated and prepare for what lies ahead. For one local Perry Traditional Academy student, the future looks very promising.

Kara Dragone of Bonvue Street, a 2005 Perry graduate, recently won a \$5,000 Crest Smile Ambassador Scholarship through Crest and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Kara was one of five regional winners selected from 1,500 applicants nationwide. She plans to use this money toward her biology degree and a dentistry career.

Kara is Vice-President of the Sara Heinz House's Keystone Club—a Boys and Girls Club. She attended both the Regional Conference in Massachusetts and the National Conference this spring in Orlando.

Attending the Keystone Club's Regional Conference, she learned about the Crest Smile Ambassador Scholarship. One of the scholarship's requirements was an interest in pursuing a public health career. Other requirements included outstanding contributions to their local Club, school and community; a 3.0 GPA; and time spent shadowing a local dental professional.

Winners were presented at the National Conference.

Kara has been active with the 800-member Heinz House for 10 years. This year she was selected Youth of the Year and Most Outstanding Member. Both awards were for her participation and volunteer efforts. Kara said it is a great place to meet people and kids from all over. She enjoys the opportunity to play in soccer and basketball leagues and take cooking and dance classes, just to name a few of the activities.

Kara will attend LaRoche College and major in biology. She will play soccer and has made the cheerleading squad. Once she gets her degree, she will apply to dental school. Her goal is to get into the University of Pittsburgh's program.

At Perry, Kara was involved in soccer, softball, cheerleading, National Honor Society, Student Council, and the Pittsburgh Passion All Star Cheerleading Squad. She has two sisters, both active at Heinz House: Krysta, a sophomore and Kyrsten, a 7th grader.

For more on the Sarah Heinz House visit <http://www.saraheinz-house.org>. Learn more about the Boys and Girls Club of America and Keystone club at <http://www.bgca.org/>.

## Reverse Mortgage: Is It Right For You?

State Representative Don Walko

A reverse mortgage is a special type of home loan that lets homeowners over the age of 62 convert a portion of the equity in their home into cash. But unlike a traditional mortgage or home equity loan, no repayment is required until the borrower no longer uses the home as a primary residence.

Tax-free cash payments can be received in a variety of ways, including a lump sum, a line of credit to be accessed when money is needed, or monthly payments. The cash can provide seniors with financial security without having to sell their home. In addition, the payments do not affect Social Security or Medicare benefits.

There are no income or medical eligibility requirements. The amount of money you can get from a reverse mortgage generally depends on the applicant's age, the type of reverse mortgage sought, the appraised value of the home, current interest rates, and in some cases, the area in which you live. Most property types are eligible for a reverse mortgage.

Taking out any type of loan carries risks and financial implications. Free information is available from AARP by calling 1-800-209-8085 or visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development also has free information on its web site at [www.hud.gov/groups/seniors.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/groups/seniors.cfm). I encourage anyone considering a reverse mortgage to contact these organizations, discuss your options and concerns with your family, and consult a lawyer with questions about estate planning.

If you have questions about the above or any other state-related matter, please call my North Side district office at 412-321-5523.



**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)

## Julia Vidic: 2005 Citizen of the Year

SUSAN ROONEY

Julia Vidic was named the 2005 "Citizen of the Year" by Observatory Hill Inc. She received the award at the Northside Leadership Conference dinner on Thursday, May 26.

In May 1999, Julia, her husband Brian, and son Sam moved from Oakland to Richey Avenue in Observatory Hill. According to Julia, she happened upon the neighborhood and feels fortunate to have found a house on a tree-lined street with beautiful homes and wonderful neighbors.

Julia is pro-active in seeking solutions to problems. She takes the initiative and moves forward with projects that will benefit the neighborhood. Last summer, she gathered volunteers to improve the look of the Venture Street and Baytree Street intersections with East Street and Evergreen Avenue, respectively. They pulled weeds and laid mulch to create a better image for Observatory Hill.

Similarly, when Julia found that drug dealers were moving into her neighborhood, she alerted residents. Julia contacted police and once again did the necessary leg work to inform the community. She then helped bring the blockwatch program to her neighborhood.

When you ask Julia to do a job for the community, you can consider it done. She works hard and is a team player.

Julia now has four children and her beautiful home on Richey Avenue is complete.

Observatory Hill Inc. is proud to have Julia Vidic as a neighbor. We congratulate her on her selection as our 2005 Citizen of the Year.



## Fun in Riverview Park...

**Stars at  
Riverview  
Jazz Series**  
Riverview  
Park entrance,  
Saturdays at 7 p.m.

Artist	Date
Bobby Short	July 9
Rick Kacin & Blues Sector	July 16
Roger Barbour Jazz Quartet	July 23
Kenia	July 30
Roger Humphries	August 6
Lee Robinson & Iska	August 13
Salsamba	August 20
Mystic Knights of the Sea	August 27

**Comcast  
Cinema in  
the Park**  
Riverview  
Park entrance,  
Saturdays at 9 p.m.

Movie	Date
Clifford's Really Big Movie	July 9
Shrek 2	July 16
The Prince & Me	July 23
Harry Potter & the Prisoner of Azkaban	July 30
Finding Neverland	August 6
A Cinderella Story	August 13
The Dust Factory	August 20
SpongeBob SquarePants	August 27

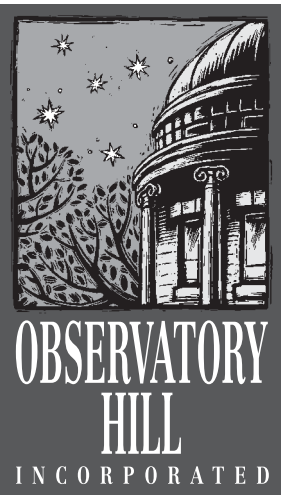
## Family Fun in Observatory Hill!

TIM TUINSTRA

Observatory Hill neighbors and friends can enjoy a wide variety of activities to choose from this summer and most are FREE.

For swimming, call 412-255-2539, or just head over to the pool near the Riverview Park entrance. (Swimming fees apply). For tours of the Allegheny Observatory, make reservations at 412-321-2400 for a tour on a Thursday or Friday evening.

Be sure to stop by the Visitor's Center at the entrance to Riverview Park. From June 11—August 27, 4–9 p.m. Monday – Friday; 11 a.m.–11 p.m. Saturday; and 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Sunday.



# One of America's Safest Urban Neighborhoods

TIM TUINSTR



Observatory Hill continues to enjoy a reputation as one of the safest neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, according to police reports and statistics. Pittsburgh consistently ranks among the safest large U.S. cities. Combined, this makes our neighborhood one of urban America's safest.

As everywhere, there are challenges, and Observatory Hill Inc. encourages ongoing efforts to make our area safer still. OHI thanks the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and Magisterial District Judge Robert Ravenstahl, who have addressed OHI volunteers in recent months to update us on crime reports and to make suggestions on increasing safety.

OHI helped to organize several blockwatches that unite neighbors in keeping a watchful eye and serving as a visible warning to potential criminals. Join the blockwatch on your street or contact OHI for information on starting one if none yet operates near you.

Here are some other helpful tips that make sense. Not only will they serve as a deterrent to crime, they will also provide you with greater peace of mind.

- Always lock your doors when away from home or asleep.
- Never leave the car running while unattended.
- Never leave the windows open in an unattended house or car.
- Consider installing locks on home windows.
- Leave nothing valuable in sight in a parked car.
- Keep your home well-lit.
- Arrange to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped or picked up by neighbors when away on a trip.
- Call 911 whenever you witness crime or suspicious activity. Avoid confronting the perpetrator(s).
- After calling 911, file "silent complaint" forms with police when you have a chronic problem to report (repeated disturbing of the peace, drug dealing, etc.). This provides police with a record with which to better track and prevent wrongdoing. Include descriptions, license plate numbers, etc. Get copies at [http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/police/html/police\\_tip\\_form.html](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/police/html/police_tip_form.html), call Zone 1 Police at 412-323-7201, or call City Councilman Luke Ravenstahl at 412-255-2135.

We can build on our success to make Observatory Hill even safer and more pleasant.

## Saluting a Neighborhood Hero...

### Memories of Maryjane Berry: Community Leader, Caring Friend

JANE SESTRIC



Maryjane Berry, longtime neighbor and former officer of Observatory Hill, Inc. passed away on February 5th after a long illness. She is missed by her three daughters and their families—including 11 grandchildren—two brothers and many friends.

For more than 50 years, Maryjane, husband Jack, and their three daughters lived on Richey Avenue. She lived as an outspoken advocate for her community, a "take charge" neighbor who put her time and talents to good use for the well-being of the street where she raised her daughters and the neighborhood beyond—from the business district to the park to the greater North Side.

Her friends recall laughter and good times with Maryjane, no matter what the event. She was a lifelong member of the Daughters of Erin, Court #9, a longtime 26th Ward Democratic Party Committee Woman, a 26th Ward Democratic Action Committee member, and active in community organizations in Observatory Hill. In the early

1980s, Maryjane and other neighbors founded the blockwatch group for Richey Avenue and Dunlap Place, which developed into Preservation North Inc., later known as Observatory Hill, Inc.

Through her example, Maryjane motivated others to take active community roles. She was a board member and officer with Observatory Hill, Inc. for more than fifteen years. In recognition of her considerable contributions to the neighborhood, Maryjane was named North Sider of the Year for Observatory Hill in spring 1988. She and her family worked hard to coordinate and staff the 1994 Riverview Park Centennial Celebration.

The neighbors who grew up near Maryjane's home recall the front porch chats, walks with her to the park, block parties, and holiday events. Close neighbors thought of her as their "Second Mom" and a fun-loving friend.

## Fight Nuisance Activity & Crime

REPORT FROM CITY COUNCILMAN LUKE RAVENSTAHL

Nuisance activity and crime continue to be challenges that face all of our North Side neighborhoods. My office regularly receives calls regarding unwelcome activity. My staff and I constantly interact with the police regarding these very serious issues. Although progress may seem slow at times, I assure you that I do not take these matters lightly, and neither do the police.

Chief Robert McNeilly and I are working diligently to increase the number of officers on the street to the budgeted number of 900. I am confident that we will be fully staffed in the near future, thus giving our officers more resources to address the needs of our communities.

The police need the help of residents to ensure we are productive in our attempts to minimize these nuisance activities. Many constituents have called my office and the police with information such as license plate numbers and times of day of the suspicious activities, and I urge others to do so as well. The Zone 1 Police can be reached at 412-323-7201. There is also an online Police Tip Form available at [http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/police/html/police\\_tip\\_form.html](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/police/html/police_tip_form.html). Individuals may also want to get involved with their neighborhood group or local blockwatch in order to share information. If you do not know of a neighborhood group in your area, my office can assist you. I am confident that together we can help make our communities a better place to live.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding any city-related matter, please feel free to call my office at 412-255-2135.



**Luke Ravenstahl**  
Observatory Hill's City  
Council Representative

City County Building  
Suite 510/Floor 5  
414 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Phone: 412-255-2135  
Fax: 412-255-2129  
Email: [luke.ravenstahl@city.pittsburgh.pa.us](mailto:luke.ravenstahl@city.pittsburgh.pa.us)

## Memories

PEG PERLIK

### Do you remember...

... a man bringing a pony around the neighborhoods for pictures? Do you still have yours?

... the scissor grinder?

... the rags and old iron man?

... the ice ball man?

... when men could buy suits with two pairs of pants?

... dad or grandpa wearing spats?

... Perry Pizza?

Hey people 50 and over! How about helping me out here? What do you remember?

Please send me your memories. Mail to the OHI office or call 412-231-2887. Or e-mail [tth30@yahoo.com](mailto:tth30@yahoo.com).

## 2004-05 School Year Busy and Productive for Observatory Hill Schools

BARB STANTON

**Chatham Elementary** students hosted Take Your Father To School Day along with the annual Spring Instrumental. The Youth Crime Watch took a dinner cruise on the Gateway Clipper's Majestic.

Students participated in the Pittsburgh Public Schools Annual Track Meet. And while wearing Dr. Seuss hats, celebrated Dr. Seuss Day for the Drop Everything and Read promotion.

Chatham started its Head Start program, to prepare its students gradually for kindergarten. Parents had Dashboard Training on the school's website, where parents check their child's homework and attendance.

**Incarnation Academy** 6th through 8th graders incorporated international studies into lessons, including Africa, Japan, and Germany.

They watched the movie Hotel Rwanda to understand that conflict. Students contributed \$325 to Amnesty International and raised more selling bookmarks, bracelets, and bandanas during the OHI House Tour.

Studying Japan, pupils made 1,000 origami cranes as a peace wish or prayer. Younger students wrote to soldiers in Iraq.

Second and 3rd graders did art projects corresponding to stories they read. The primary grades' Spring Fling presented a musical review of what they learned. Kindergarteners had a beach party complete with bathing suits.

**Perry Traditional Academy** students kept busy with community events. They took a training course on better volunteering and started a clean-up project on Bonvue and Waldorf Streets and Watson Boulevard to prepare for the OHI House Tour.

The drama department presented Seussical the Musical, and Perry's musical group performed at the Three Rivers Arts Festival.

Jerome Bettis spoke about Asthma Awareness, and the city Housing Authority's Clean Slate program promoted alcohol and drug awareness.

The Perry football team won the City League championship in the fall. This spring, the boys' baseball team reached the City League final and then made the PIAA Class AAA playoffs.

The year ended with class officer elections and the Heinz Field prom. This fall, the new principal will be Robert McMurray, replacing Jacqueline Blakey-Tate, 2004-05 acting principal. Previous principal Robert Miller has retired.

## Annual Registration Form for Membership to Observatory Hill, Inc.

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

Member's 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 p.m. All are welcome to listen and participate!

## The OHI Board

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*President*  
412-323-0899

**Tim Tuinstra**  
*Vice President*  
412-931-6013  
tht30@yahoo.com

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**Peg Perlik**  
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**Lynn Schraf**  
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lschraf@earthlink.net

**Lorraine Schwartz**

**Richard and Jane Sestric**  
*Emeritus Board Members*  
412-231-8134  
sestria@telerama.com

## Committees

### Entertainment

Brian Pinter\*  
Quynh McGuire  
Susan Rooney

### House Tour

Entire Board  
Mark Masterson  
Glenn Miller  
Peg Perlik  
Lorraine Schwartz  
Julia Vidic

### Housing Initiative

Lynn Schraf\*  
Brian Chapman  
Denise Colbert  
Dave Gilbreath  
Barbara Glynn  
Michelle Kowalczyk  
Rafal Kowalczyk  
Quynh McGuire  
Barbara Pace  
Stacey Regan  
Mark Reisman  
Susan Rooney

### Membership

Peg Perlik\*  
Barbara Glynn  
Glenn Miller  
Barbara Pace  
Susan Rooney  
Lorraine Schwartz

### Newsletter

Tim Tuinstra\*  
Moses Carper  
Denise Colbert  
Dave Gilbreath  
Skip and Jason McCrea  
Barbara Pace  
Scott Pipitone  
Susan Rooney  
Lynn Schraf  
Rich Sestric

### Nominating

Entire Board

### Neighborhood & Business Development

Katrina Brabham  
Mike Everhart  
Walt Nalducci  
Tim Tuinstra

### Northside Leadership Conference (NSLC)

Mike Everhart  
Walt Nalducci

### Parks

Moses Carper\*  
Brian Chapman  
Denise Colbert  
Barbara Glynn  
Skip McCrea  
Barbara Pace  
Rich Sestric

### Public Safety

Susan Rooney\*  
\*Chairperson

### Observatory Hill Journal Credits

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