

OH Journal

Observatory Hill Incorporated



The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

Fall 2016

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT IN OBSERVATORY HILL

Thirty-three years ago, the first Tuesday in August was chosen as a national event to celebrate communities, to bring neighbors together and to shed a light on crime prevention. This year, there were 48 celebrations across Pittsburgh neighborhoods, and Observatory Hill was one of them. It was an evening filled with music, fun, raffles, balloon entertainment, food and friendship. Thank you to Allen Place Community Services, The Phoenix Jazz Project, The Growing Patch Learning Center and Debbie our balloon artist from Mike the Balloon Guy for making this evening so memorable. Thank you to everyone who donated food and canned goods - we collected over 100 pounds for the Food Bank at the Riverview United Presbyterian Church.



TAKING A LOOK BACK: PERRY HIGH SCHOOL

by Kerry Connell

Perry High School, formerly known as the 15th Ward School Number 1, is located at 3875 Perrysville Avenue in Observatory's Hill business district. The school changed its name in 1913 to Perry Elementary School after it was incorporated in the Pittsburgh public school system. On May 4, 1923, dedication services were held for the newly constructed high school. In 1925, an addition was built that included a cafeteria, shops, classrooms and a gymnasium. Today, all City of Pittsburgh resident students may apply to this magnet school. Acceptance is based on available space and racial balance. As befits a school with a name that recalls Commodore Perry, the school's sports teams are known as the Commodores.



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FROM THE DESK OF DARLENE HARRIS



About six years ago, I purchased a water fountain designed to accommodate two very important groups of society: our neighbors with disabilities and our dogs! This past summer, the water fountain was finally installed in the Riverview Park dog park. Riverview Park is a popular area for everyone to spend time outdoors, and I am thrilled that the fountain has made its debut after all this time.

The high temperatures this past summer set records, and being out in the heat for too long without water is dangerous for both us and our pets. The Riverview Park dog park is a wonderful place to spend quality time with our pets, whether it means going out for a walk, or playing Frisbee on a sunny day. With the new water fountain in place, we have made the park a safer and healthier spot, even for our furry friends.

Over the summer, the Riverview Park playground was also redone, along with Riverview Ave. Pothole patches only last for so long, and streets like Riverview Ave in Riverview Park have been in need of repairs for quite a while. The catch basins on Riverview Ave have been repaired and replaced as needed. For our many North Side neighbors who enjoy spending time in Riverview Park, I know that the repaved streets and repaired catch basins come as a relief to bikers and drivers alike. As for the Riverview Park playground, I hope that its upgrades make the park safer and more fun for our kids.

Street lights in Observatory Hill were installed on Perrysville Ave, where many businesses will benefit during the coming months as days get shorter and nights get longer. With the roads repaired and new lights installed, our community's safety has been largely improved. To the constituents who were affected by the poor road conditions in Riverview Park, and the lack of street lights along Perrysville Ave, I thank you for your patience.

Throughout the year, my office has received complaints about collapsed and clogged catch basins, as well as water-logged, swampy grass throughout Observatory Hill. Our office is aware of these problems, and we are working with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to alleviate the issues we have had with rainwater overflow. We have also been calling PWSA on a weekly basis due to complaints about brown water coming through house faucets in Observatory Hill.

—, pittsburghpa.gov/district1/feedback, or darlene.harris@pittsburghpa.gov with any questions or concerns.

Darlene M. Harris
Councilwoman, District 1

THE BAYTREE GARDEN WILL GROW ON YOU

The community garden located on Baytree Street made great strides before winter arrived thanks to the 30 ALCOA volunteers who worked through GTECH Strategies. Several raised garden beds have been prepared, new hand rails are up, a 22-foot section of hillside has been dug for a retaining wall, a split rail fence was installed and new solar lights, providing a charming touch. Thanks to Doug Deckert for his time and efforts in overseeing this new project. OHI will be teaming up with Riverview United Presbyterian Church who will take some space to grow vegetables for their community food bank. Volunteers are welcome to help with watering and weeding.



FALL CLEAN UP DAY SCHEDULED

Join us on Saturday, October 8 as we gather to pick up trash and to clean up the business district and as many side streets as time allows. Tools and trash bags will be provided. We will meet at 10am in the parking lot across from Schorr's Bakery on Perrysville Avenue and we will work until Noon.

FALL EVENT SCHEDULE AT ALLEN PLACE

Looking for fun activities? Look no further. There are a variety of happenings scheduled at the Allen Place Community Center. Beginning on September 6th, the following classes and activities will be offered. Call Denise or Mansoor to register at **412-231-1531**.

- Line Dancing on Mondays from 6pm – 7:30pm
- Computer Class on Tuesdays from 10am – 11am
- Fun with Fitness Boot Camp on Tuesdays from 6pm – 7pm
- Tai Chi Class on Tuesdays from 11am to Noon
- Low Impact Exercise on Wednesday & Thursday from 10am – 11am
- Bible Study on Wednesdays from 11am to Noon
- Arts & Crafts Seasonal Projects on Thursdays from 10am to 11am
- Beginners Crocheting and Knitting on Thursdays from 11am to Noon
- Choice of board games, cards & Bingo on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays from 1pm - 3pm

A Word From The Mayor's Office

What a great summer it has been for Pittsburgh! The City celebrated the 200th anniversary of the swearing-in of our first Mayor, Ebenezer Denny, on July 9 with a parade and celebration. Here are some other pieces of news that the Office of Mayor William Peduto would like to share with our friends in Observatory Hill.

The Bicentennial will continue to be celebrated through the end of the year, and in late July an innovative Bicentennial project for the end of the year was revealed. The Bicentennial Commission announced that the Rachel Carson Bridge will become the site of an environmental art installation. This unique work will be revealed during the 2016 Light Up Night celebration.

One of the top priorities of Mayor Peduto's administration has been increasing the public accessibility of City information and data. To that end, the City will implement a new web site using mapping technology that will make building permit, license, violations and zoning information transparent and easily trackable for residents and businesses. The new site is expected to launch in fall 2016.

Mayor Peduto and Councilwoman Theresa Kail-Smith have launched a school supply drive for Pittsburgh students. Boxes for donations were placed in the lobby of the City-County Building so that donations of school supplies - paper, pencils, notebooks and backpacks could be collected.

Finally, the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County received some exciting news regarding the My Brother's Keeper Initiative in July. The Sprout Fund will join the City and County in efforts to close the opportunity gap for young people of color in the Pittsburgh region. The Heinz Endowments will provide support through a \$200,000 grant for Sprout, the City and the County to continue to build on the progress of My Brother's Keeper.



Shining Up the Gem in Observatory Hill

Many improvements are on the way for our Observatory Hill neighborhood – from the business district on Perrysville Avenue to Riverview Park. We were delighted to see the improvements made to the area surrounding the Allegheny Observatory and the new playground equipment and surface. It has been a productive summer. Here is a snapshot of just one of those projects along with the finances that were injected into our neighborhood.

Riverview Park Improvements Project

by Cas Pellegini, City of Pittsburgh Project Manager

The City of Pittsburgh: **\$687,000**

University of Pittsburgh: **\$210,000**

The project consisted of the restoration of the existing driveway starting at the Visitor's Center following up and around the Allegheny Observatory. The design was led by MTR Landscape Architects who referenced historic photos of the site in the early 1900's that show farmland surrounding the building at its inception.



Site features include: a new drinking fountain at the off-leash exercise area that is also accessible to handicapped people as well as to dogs; 10 newly paved parking spaces; a new meadow along the entire length of the driveway up to the building; storm-water management provisions such as new storm and sanitary drainage to reduce storm water runoff; new period style "dark-sky" and star gazer friendly light fixtures along the driveway and parking area; additional trees and other plantings; a new guiderail system between the driveway and steep wooded slope to ensure vehicular safety and lastly a widened driveway to allow more space for cars and buses coming in opposite directions to pass.

The project was done in cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh who owns approximately two acres of land around the building. Similar site features were accomplished.

Together, the City of Pittsburgh and the University of Pittsburgh collaborated to restore one of Pittsburgh's oldest and most remarkable building sites using state of the art design and technology.

Neighbor of the Year Award Honors the Schaffer's Accomplishments

by Chris Cruz

Bonvue Street residents Leslee and Tim Schaffer started volunteering in the neighborhood in 2006 when they got involved with the block watch group. From there, they started organizing neighborhood clean ups and more, eventually co-chairing the block watch group when the previous volunteer stepped down. They raised money for the group by organizing a craft show and a neighborhood yard sale. They also worked towards making neighborhood improvements by applying for a grant for Bonvue Street and even distributing their own newsletter to keep neighbors informed.

Beyond that, Tim, known as "Mr. Tim" has mowed the lawns and shoveled the sidewalks for several neighbors on their street, as well as mentoring neighborhood children by teaching them to play baseball - it is not uncommon to see him giving pointers and helping them with their pitching techniques. He has purchased baseball gloves and sports equipment and given them away so they would have what they needed to play. He also purchases and fixes up used bikes and gives them away to children who do not have one or have outgrown the one they have, as he believes "every child should have a bike." Tim has taken neighborhood

children to both Pirates and Steelers games when he has extra tickets, so that they could have that experience.

The Schaffers began volunteering at Allen Place when it first

opened on Bonvue Street in 2010, and Leslee has taught both cake decorating and computer classes there. They co-chaired a successful National Night Out event with over 100 people in attendance.

In 2012, Leslee was elected to the OHI board and has worked tirelessly to improve all of Observatory Hill, focusing on property concerns, membership and the OHI newsletter as well as the annual Heritage Day event. The Schaffers have made Bonvue Street and all of Observatory Hill a better place for all of their neighbors.



OHI Annual Fall Spaghetti Dinner & More

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2016
5PM TO 8PM
RIVERVIEW PARK ACTIVITIES BUILDING**

Join the OHI Board as we come together to celebrate our investments and impact in Observatory Hill. Bring out your families, join your neighbors and meet new friends. Dust off those dancing shoes and enjoy an evening with live music, door prizes, 50/50 raffle and fun activities for all ages. Or just sit back relax and enjoy a delicious, hearty meal. We hope to see everyone there.

Menu for the evening: Spaghetti with meatballs or marinara sauce, salad, dinner rolls, dessert and beverage.

Tickets prices: \$8.00 at the door, \$7.00 in advance, children ages 4–11, \$5.00, children under 4 free. Tickets go on sale September 1, 2016.

For updated details and ticket sales, follow us and check out our Facebook page volunteering information or visit our website at www.observatoryhill.net. Or contact **Dorrie Smith @ 412-877-4828** for additional ticket sales information.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 21: Monthly OHI board meeting at 7pm at the Byzantine Seminary, 3605 Perrysville Ave.

September 23: Spaghetti Dinner and Family Night Out. Held from 5pm to 8pm in the Activities Building near the playground at Riverview Park. Take out available.

October 8: OHI neighborhood clean-up from 10am to Noon. Meet in the parking lot across the street from Schorr's Bakery.

October 19: Monthly OHI board meeting at 7pm at the Byzantine Seminary, 3605 Perrysville Ave.

October 30: Deadline to submit OHI board member application.

November 16: Monthly OHI board meeting at 7pm at the Byzantine Seminary, 3605 Perrysville Ave.

No OHI Board meeting in December. Happy Holidays!

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

We have a lot going on in our business district. We have received the \$10,000 grant from the Sprout Fund. Business owners have been able to purchase new front doors, replace broken windows and purchase new signage.

Thanks to Darlene Harris, funding was made available for additional lighting to brighten up our commercial district and also for several new sidewalks. While the sidewalks were torn up, OHI took out a \$20,000 loan to replace the old water/sewer/supply lines so that we will be ready for our new businesses.

Jeff Wagner is working hard to secure additional trees for our next tree planting and would love to have tree pits for the entire length of the business district. He has hit a few snags with underground utilities and we have reached out to Darlene Harris to see if her office can be of any assistance.

Animal Friends is continuing to target Observatory Hill through November for their mass trapping of feral cats. They will be going door to door speaking with residents and looking for loose cats to humanely trap, spay/neuter and vaccinate. The cats will then be returned back to their original location – free of charge. They are asking if you have an outdoor cat to put a collar on it, or have it micro-chipped so they know it belongs to someone. Friendly cats that are determined to be strays may be put up for adoption. If a cat has a small cut out on its right ear tip, it has been taken care of. For more info, contact Kaley at **412-847-7068** or email her at kkaczynski@thinkingoutsidethecage.org.

Our first ever History Tour took place in July and got rave reviews. Thank you to the committee who worked so hard to put this together, to our many volunteers who made the day so enjoyable and to our local historians, John Canning and Dave Grinnell, who fit this event into their schedules and provided us with much of the content for the day's events. Our History Tour booklet looked so amazing because of Kerry Connell – who contributed the historical write-ups and Eliza Mross – who designed the lay out. Their creativity made this booklet an awesome keepsake. Thank you to Joanna Yoho and Barbara Burns for their lovely flowers and to Dave and Patty Wilson for being such amazing hosts! Well done everyone! We could not have done it without you.

The Bonvue Revitalization Project is making progress. We have chosen a contractor who has signed a letter of intent to rehab our first five houses. We need to finalize our budget numbers and then it's go time! We have closed on another home bringing our total up to six houses in our name with more deals in the works.

Weight Loss Group Meets on Mondays

Need help in losing weight? Looking for the “right” group for help? Look no further; TOPS is in your neighborhood. We offer great support and friendship. TOPS meet Monday evenings at Incarnation Church at 4071 Franklin Road, in Observatory Hill. Weigh-in is at 6:15pm followed by a meeting at 6:30pm. For more information contact: Darren at **412-877-7761**.

Improvements to 311 Make Reporting Easier

By Wendy Urbanic

The 311 Response Center opened in 2006 as the City of Pittsburgh's customer service center. If you have questions, concerns or requests such as getting a pothole filled, reporting a broken street light or requesting a refuse schedule, 311 can help – just dial **311** or our 10-digit number, **412-255-2621**. Last year we took a total of 96,530 calls. This year, from January - July, we have taken 53,831. Requests can be reported anonymously.

The 311 Response Center is continuously working to make contacting your city government faster and easier. We have expanded our call center hours from 7am - 7pm, Mon - Friday, if you want to speak to one of our customer service professionals. In the past year we have implemented new software that enables requests to go directly to the receiving department rather than waiting in a queue to be routed. Our website allows customers to create a personal account where they can track their requests and includes a robust knowledge base for easy access to information here: <http://pittsburghpa.gov/311/form>. In addition, we have a popular Twitter account, **@Pgh311**, where you can also submit requests, and find fun facts about our city. We also accept text messages at **412-328-2771**.

Our most exciting news is the introduction of our new mobile app, **MyBurgh**. **MyBurgh** is available on iOS and Android and can be downloaded free at GooglePlay and iTunes. It allows you to easily capture the location and share pictures on the spot when reporting concerns. The app also contains popular seasonal information, from the snow resource center to the summer CitiParks schedules. Another great feature is easy access to your refuse and recycling pick up days and optional reminders when to put your trash out to the curb.

Download it today!

New Day Care Opens on Bonvue Street

Looking for a day care? Check out the Growing Patch Learning Center located at 227 Bonvue Street inside the Allen Place Community Services building. They are a day care learning center which provides childcare for ages 2-14 years old and after school programming for ages 6 to 8 years old. The Growing Patch is open 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday offering before and after school care which includes homework helps, computer time and health and fitness time. Contact the director, Denise A. Barron by calling **412-758-4177** for more information. Are you a Facebook user? Visit their page for additional details.

BOARD ELECTIONS HELD THIS FALL

We are collecting applications for those interested in being on the board of OHI. This is a two-year term which involves: attending the monthly board meetings held the 3rd Wednesday of the month (no meeting is held in December); helping with the annual house tour and/or the annual Heritage Festival and also participating in one of the various committees that make up the board. Choices of committees are: House Tour, Communications and Marketing, Membership, Community Development, Neighborhood Improvements, Public Safety, Riverview Park and Northside Leadership Conference. If you are interested in being on the board and can make this time commitment, please contact Leslee for an application: **412-231-1650** or send an email to: **ohipgh@gmail.com** and an application will be emailed to you. Deadline for submissions is October 30.

THE OHI BOARD

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Housing, Heritage Day
Riverview Park, Dinners

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Business District

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House Tour

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Annual Registration Form for Membership to Observatory Hill Inc.

Mail to: Observatory Hill Incorporated.
P.O. Box 100247, Pittsburgh, PA 15233
412-736-2489

Members Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Date Paid _____

E-mail Address _____

Membership Contribution: (check one)

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

___ 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.