

OHI Journal

Observatory Hill, Incorporated

The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

May 2013

HOP ABOARD THE TROLLEY: OBSERVATORY HILL'S 'PARK IN OUR BACKYARD' TOUR ON JUNE 2

Ever wonder what it was like to pack a picnic lunch and hop the trolley to West View Park? This year you can catch the trolley and visit several homes and a few Riverview Park buildings during the Observatory Hill House and Park Tour sponsored by First Niagara. You will visit houses on Richey, Perrysville, Waldorf and Riverview Avenues that have the park for their backyard. Then we will ride through the park stopping at historic buildings and ending with refreshments at the Chapel Shelter. Tickets for the 'Park in our Backyard' tour sponsored by First Niagara with support from 'Molly's Trolleys' are \$15.00 the day of the tour or \$12.00 in advance if purchased by Wednesday, May 29.

You'll take a trip back in time as you see the charming streets of Observatory Hill from Riverview Avenue north to the corner of Perrysville and DeFoe to Waldorf and Richey Avenue. Homeowners will bring out the 'welcome mat' and relate the 'home sweet home' journey that brought them to Observatory Hill. What a picturesque way to experience the streets of Observatory Hill in this house tour that first took place in 1993.

The tour will conclude at the Chapel Shelter where we'll display photos and a slide presentation about development of the area and of Riverview Park. Founded in 1894, the park once included a zoo, nature center, Watson's Cabin, and a Merry-Go-Round. So why not hop on



board and travel with friends to explore the neighborhood and the 'Park in our Backyard' on Sunday, June 2 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.? For tickets and more information please call 412-736-2489 or contact the house tour committee at OHlhousetour@comcast.net

We're saving you a seat to tour local homes and the 'Park in our Backyard.' If you would like to volunteer, help is needed in a variety of areas including party prep for the before and after parties, set up that day, and decent guides for the tour. It's a great way to meet neighbors, and see how awesome our neighborhood is! You might catch the "House Tour Bug" and want to take it to *your* street! Please contact JoAnn Pomietto 412-931-7729 jopomietto@comcast.net or Denise Colbert dmcobert519@gmail.com

BLOCK PARTIES GROWING FRIENDSHIPS IN SUMMER AND FALL!

You can get to know your new neighbors, hear more about the latest news of longtime friends and share some neighborly fun by planning a Block Party on your street. Around our neighborhood there is a tradition of hosting block parties each summer and fall, like a garden of community goodwill along the streets here.

There are a few block parties in our community that have been bringing folks together for some time: on Richey Avenue, Delaware/Orleans and on Marshal Road in Acorn Hill. Block parties feature games for kids, music, campfires or cookouts. Rain or shine, the good times can't be beat. Do you have plans for a block party this year?

You can help share your block party experiences by sending photos with captions and stories to us for posting on our OHI Facebook page or website. Please send your photos and stories to OHIpgh@gmail.com



Acorn Hill Block Party photos courtesy of Seth Rosenberg.

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Memorial to Moses, Services for Pets



The City of Pittsburgh's Spay and Neuter Program makes a costly surgery free for all Pittsburgh pet owners. Up to five household dogs or cats are eligible for the program per City of Pittsburgh resident. An additional benefit is that having a spayed or neutered dog reduces the cost of a city dog license by half. I encourage you to share this information with your friends and neighbors.

Feral cats can be spayed or neutered through the program as well and are approved on a case-by-case basis. All feral cats must be properly held within a humane trap when brought in for the procedure. Humane traps can be borrowed from the City of Pittsburgh Animal Care and Control with a refundable deposit of \$50.00 or from one of the program's Shelter Partner Contacts.

To schedule your pet for a spay or neuter appointment, you will need to provide proof of residency, up-to-date vaccination records, a valid City of Pittsburgh dog license, and a completed application form. For more information and an application form, visit the City of Pittsburgh Animal Care and Control website at www.pittsburghpa.gov/animalcontrol or call their office at 412-255-2036.

Work on the long awaited lighting improvements to Perrysville Avenue's business district will begin this spring! The project's LED lights will not only brighten the district, but will also save energy.

In my column in the previous Observatory Hill newsletter, I wrote about the passing of Moses Carper. As many know, Moses was an active member of Observatory Hill Citizens Incorporated. He also helped beautify the entry way to Riverview Park for everyone's enjoyment. To acknowledge his extraordinary community work, Moses will be recognized during this year's Riverview Heritage Festival on June 8 in Riverview Park. I look forward to seeing you all there.

As always, please do not hesitate to call my office if I can be of any assistance at 412-255-2135.

Darlene M. Harris
City Council President

PITTSBURGH PERRY BIOTECHNOLOGY STUDIES IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

Biotechnology is a program blending science, technology and engineering, where students learn modern biology skills along with an in-depth understanding of DNA and proteins. The program is designed for students in grades 10, 11 and 12 who love science and hands on experiments. The Biotechnology pathway is recommended for students interested in exploring science beyond the classroom and students preparing for college.

Two-year students can qualify for college credits and earn a Math/Science Magnet seal on their diploma. All students use

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A Memorial for Joanne at the Riverview Dog Park



Joanne Hollinger, a Northsider and volunteer clown who amused and delighted audiences for 25 years died in September at age 70. Her best known persona was that of "Petunia" the clown, who wore a flowered dress with an aqua-blue vest, a purple wig, a little straw hat and giant blue leather shoes. She frequently clowned for Children's Hospital and local charities benefiting veterans. Some of her regular volunteer performances included the annual Veterans Boat Ride on the Gateway Clipper and Rolling Thunder, a group that advocates for prisoners of war and MIA service members.

While clowning was her greatest passion, those who knew her best were the people she came to know at Riverview Dog Park on the Northside, which she visited every evening with her 95 lb. dog, Sir Walter. "She made incredible friends at Riverview Dog Park, who supported her tremendously," said her nephew, Mr. Deverts of McCandless.

"Joanne was actually my first friend in Pittsburgh," said Katie Wagner, a Brighton Heights resident who works in human resources at BNY Mellon, downtown. "I met her three years ago when I moved here from Tennessee. I went to the dog park and the very first person to greet me was Joanne."

"She joked around with me about my accent, but that's how I knew she liked me. She was funny and welcoming and you just felt at home around her. I kept coming back because of Joanne. She became part of a new family for me because I have no family here and didn't know anyone at all," Joanne continued.

Ms. Hollinger did not speak with her friends at the dog park about her illness. She continued coming to the dog park every evening even though she was very sick some of those days. Even until two weeks before her death, she insisted on performing as a clown at a charity event for special needs children. She was so weak she needed help getting dressed in her costume and someone had to drive her to the event. "I believed she was going to make it because she told me her time was not done," Ms. Wagner said. "She said she still had children she needed to cheer up as a clown."

In remembrance of Joanne and in celebration of her incredible life, her friends at the Riverview Dog Park have come together to honor her memory. They have made arrangements with the city to have a memorial park bench installed with a plaque, and also plant a dogwood tree. Their hope is that the bench and tree will forever be at the dog park as a symbol of how Joanne's spirit, love, and laughter lives on in all of our hearts.

Although they are excited about this memorial, there is a cost involved. The total amount for the bench, dogwood tree planting and plaque comes close to over \$2,000. If you can make a donation to the cause, please send a check or money order made payable to Treasurer, City of Pittsburgh with the words Joanne Hollinger on the memo line and send to Dept. of Public Works c/o Chuck O'Neill 414 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

Congratulations to Observatory Hill Neighbor of the Year, Donnie Friel!

by Glenn Miller

Donnie Friel grew up in suburban Philadelphia and attended the University of Pittsburgh, graduating in 1998 with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. While at Pitt, Donnie volunteered for the Pittsburgh Project and got to know the Northside. He began to work at first part-time and then full-time at the Project after graduating and moved to Watson Boulevard and later to his current home on Orleans Street in the year 2000. His current position at the Project is Homeowners Services Coordinator.



Since then, Donnie, now married with two children, has become a positive influence on our community. He has organized a Neighborhood Block Watch and actively maintains an email chain to keep neighbors informed and aware. His home, prominently situated at the heart of his neighborhood is the center of many activities organized by him and his wife, Bethany. These activities include an annual Block Party, New Year's Eve Party, Easter Egg Hunt, and Christmas Caroling. The events are all well attended, and bring the neighbors out to have fun and get to know each other better, knitting the community together.

In the past few years, he has organized an event and enlisted neighbors to help an elderly man clean up his property and the public sidewalk used by many. He and his wife have also joined a local church, teach a Sunday School class, and are directors of the church's Youth Group.

Although he was mugged on his very first day in Pittsburgh (in Oakland), Donnie did not let that get in the way of learning about our City, volunteering his time, and giving back in a way few others do. Observatory Hill is grateful and proud to call Donnie Friel our Neighbor of the Year.

This year is the 30th Anniversary of the Northside Leadership Conference Scholarship and Awards Dinner that takes place on Thursday evening, June 7. The theme for this year is "Faces of Northside." Community groups have nominated neighbors who have made a great impact on our Northside as a whole and Conference representatives have selected 30 of the most accomplished and important neighbors of those past 30 years to be pictured as the "Faces of Northside." If you want to attend the Dinner on Thursday evening June 6, please contact Kelly McKay for tickets by Monday, May 27 at 412-330-2559.

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extraordinary equipment that is more typically found in college labs. Not only that, Biotech students along with other high achieving Pittsburgh Perry science students enjoyed the Scitech Festival at the Carnegie Science Center this past October; 229 in all. Biotech students participate in an environmental challenge "The Fairchild @ Phipps Conservancy." Today graduates of Pittsburgh Perry's Biotechnology program are medical students, nurses, pharmacy students, pharmacy techs, and engineers. For information about the program contact Perry High School, 412-323-3400 or Ms. Wright ewright2@pghboe.net

Explore the Allegheny Observatory This Season

by Kerry Connell

The Allegheny Observatory is more than a scientific research institution — it's our neighborhood's eponymous treasure. Part of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Pittsburgh, the Observatory established standard time in 1883 and is still an active research institution.



Completed in 1912, our building is actually the second Allegheny Observatory; the first was located on a hill above Perrysville Avenue, overlooking the Mexican War Streets. With the advance of industry, the night sky from this original vantage point became inhospitable to astronomic research. Our higher hill was determined to be sufficiently removed from the smog of Allegheny, and so the new observatory was built. The building itself incorporates architectural and artistic elements that connect its mission back to the people who first pursued them.

Many of us are quite familiar with this history and appreciate its significance, and many of us would like to learn more. Luckily, we enjoy a wide variety of ways to explore the Observatory:

In 2012, Dr. Dan Handley worked with Bill Peduto to write and produce *Undaunted: the Forgotten Giants of the Allegheny Observatory*. This full-length documentary features the insights of world-renowned scientists and former directors of the Observatory. Lushly produced and meticulously researched, the film provides more than simply a history of our best-known neighbor. We also learn about the birth of astrophysics, the lives and personalities of John Brashear and James Pierpont Langley, the theory of relativity, and more. *Undaunted* is available from WQED and Amazon, or visit www.aothemovie.com/ for more information.

However, the best way to learn more about the Allegheny Observatory is to visit it in person. The annual Open House is a free, self-guided tour in the fall, occurring this year on October 11. Tickets go quickly for this popular event, so call 412-321-2400 beginning on August 1 to reserve your spot.

The University of Pittsburgh also offers free tours of the Allegheny Observatory, on Thursday nights from May through August and on Friday nights from April 1 through November 1. All tours begin at 8 p.m. and last until approximately 10 p.m. Tours include a short slide or film presentation followed by a walking tour of the building, finally ending up at the 13" Fitz Clark refractor. If it's a clear night, tourists can observe the celestial objects that are within range of the telescope. Free lectures are offered at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. Tours require a reservation — call 412-321-2400 between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

With the approach of summer and the possibility of a little more free time, we may all get a chance to learn more about the influential institution in our own backyard. Not every community is lucky enough to have a building like the Allegheny Observatory, so it makes sense that we, as its neighbors, should be its unofficial ambassadors. Share the knowledge you have, visit and explore, and check out *Undaunted* for your next movie night. You may be surprised at just how much there is to know — and how much there still is to find out.

Stepping Back in Time During House Tour of 2012

by Bonny Kwoleck

Do you remember the dining room table that you spent most of your memorable holiday dinners around? What would it feel like to go back there and have a meal?

This past summer my husband and I opened up our house for the 2012 Observatory House Tour. We were the feature house in the Post-Gazette with a story written by Kevin Kirkland. We were honored but it made sense because we wanted the tour goers to make the climb to 28 Garvin Street to see that most of us in Observatory Hill really do live on a hill. And most homes have a view of some kind. We actually live on the highest point of the city and look down on the Observatory But apparently the article got the attention of some very special people who had other interests in our house.

The day of the tour was very hectic and exciting. When the crowds started filing through, many people had questions related to the story in the paper. Then my husband introduced me to a woman who seemed more taken with the house than the others. She was holding a picture that looked like it was taken in the 1940's. She told me that she was once again standing in her grandmother's kitchen where she had stood many times before. The picture she was holding was of her grandparents, Margaret and Stephen Richard, and was taken in our back yard. Immediately I had many questions. When did they live here? When did they leave? What was it like then? So Terri gave me her email address and told me to get in touch with her. She had many other pictures.

Once the dust settled from the tour, I contacted Terri and told her how wonderful it would be to see the pictures and to get to know the family that had made my home a home for so many years. Terri and her husband accepted an invitation to brunch in her grandmother's dining room this past January, and she also brought her brother and his wife. They had gone through the family photos together and picked out the ones that had the house in them. Jeff cooked a wonderful brunch, and we all spent a good time walking around reminiscing.



The Richards had bought the house in 1937 and Margaret lived here until 1987. The pictures that they had brought ranged within that time period. It was all a bit surreal sharing names, memories, and events. They were a family like all of our families, but their time was spent here in our living room, on our back stairs, in the kitchen that actually had cabinets that were similar to the ones we had put in after we bought the house. The pictures also included photos of every room in the house on the day that Margaret moved out. It was very apparent that she loved this house.

After looking at the photos we continued to share family stories. Even though it was January, it was 62 degrees and sunny. We opened a bottle of our homemade wine and sipped it on the front porch looking at our view. We took pictures of all of us on the front porch to add to the old pictures—making this another historic event that belonged to our house.

Terri was very kind to let us keep the photos for a while so that we could scan them and have them as a history of the house we now call home. We look at these images often and it makes us love this warm wonderful house even more. We plan to return the photos to Terri and meet again for dinner and are looking forward to it because not only did we get to have this incredible experience of viewing our house's past, but we have made some wonderful friends in the process. We hope to have Terri and her family over again and we hope we make them feel as welcomed in this house as their grandparents did for all those years.

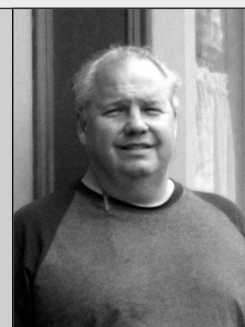
Remembering Bill Schmidt, a Good Neighbor and Friend to Many

Owner of Mr. Bill's Tap and Grill, longtime neighbor and friend, Bill Schmidt, passed away suddenly on February 20, 2013. He will be missed by many friends and members of his family: four brothers and sisters, his son Jason Schmidt, his wife Ruth, four step children and nine grandchildren. Bill was a friend to veterans, a superlative Steelers fan and our neighborhood Santa. He designed the mural that reminds us of the Battle of 1812, and Oliver Hazard Perry's role in it. He painted there: "The world may be a better place because I made a difference in the life of a child."

Bill Schmidt moved into the community from the North Hills and purchased Rich Bedding at 3919 Perrysville Avenue in 1985. At this time he became involved in the Perry North Merchant's Association with Chairman, Andy Balint. Andy and Bill's committee won funding for the commercial strip to participate in the URA's Street Face program. Andy and Bill were the first property owners

to participate in it and since then have motivated others to follow suit.

Bill has sponsored youth activities including the 1987 BMX Club called The Northside Super Crew, and gave the responsibility for running the club to the kids. As Bill put it, "I always was just kind of the overseer. I let the kids have a lot of latitude. They even designed their shirts. We used a snow cone machine to generate revenue. The kids did it all." In 1995, Bill renovated another building at 3949 Perrysville and installed an ice cream shop called Little Dippers of Observatory Hill. It gave all the kids in it business experience and earned them recognition from WPXI when Darieth Chisolm featured the crew in a segment called "Productive Kids in Pittsburgh."



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Enjoying Riverview Park Activities, History on Heritage Day June 8

This year the Riverview Park Heritage Festival will celebrate our neighborhood history and honor the late Moses Carper, a park steward, equestrian education expert and friend to young and old. Plans are now underway to dedicate a trail to Moses who operated the Chiyou Corral for many years, and to commemorate his years of service during a ceremony early in the afternoon at the Festival. The festival is slated for Saturday, June 8 from noon to 4 p.m. at our Northside Regional Park sites that include the Visitor's Education Center on Riverview Avenue, the Activities Building with adjacent green-space and Chapel Shelter areas. As always, the Riverview 5K race will take place the evening before on Friday, June 7.

Hundreds of families and children converge on the park to participate in hands-on/minds-on activities to celebrate this important regional park and Northside gem. OHI supports Citiparks' Riverview Heritage Day Festival and 5K Race each June at the start of the Stars at Riverview Concert and Movies Series by providing volunteers and planning help to coordinate this important event.

We will be exploring the frontier during Heritage Day at the Park this year. Arts in the Park, which marks 40 years of arts educational opportunities this year will be with us as well. We'll be preparing Native American snacks and a variety of crafts. Traditional attractions such as the Venture Outdoors Climbing Wall, visits from the children's favorite animal pals including the Animal Rescue League and Humane Society will be joining us that day, too. The Art Cart, celebrating its 40th anniversary, will help us expand our creativity. Please join your neighbors from across the Northside and across town as we take a trip west to frontier days.

Now in the planning stages, the Festival will include approximately 30 non-profit groups providing hands-on activities for children and families, health consultations, Observatory Tours and field games. More participants and booths are being contacted now, so please save the dates of June 7 and 8 for the 5K Race and Heritage Day Festival at Riverview Park.

If you can lend a hand with games or in serving food, please call Dorrie Smith at 412-877-4828 or Jane Sestric at 412-231-8134 to help serve a light picnic lunch and direct folks to areas of interest. Please save the date and look for more information about the Riverview 5K Run and Fitness walk on Friday evening and Heritage Day events at the Citiparks website!

Riverview 5K Run and Fitness Walk Scheduled for Friday Evening, June 7 @ 7 p.m.

Riverview Park is full of leafy trails as well as being home to a challenging paved 5K course. Kick off your weekend in the healthiest possible way — by running or walking a 5K in a lavishly forested Riverview Park. Run past the Observatory and through the park to the finish line as the crowd of on-lookers and spectators cheer you on. More information and registration details will be available soon. Please see the Riverview 5K site at the Citiparks race web page: www.riverview5k.com/



RIVERVIEW REGIONAL PARK HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATION

**PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
OBSERVATORY HILL INC.**

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2013

**RIVERVIEW PARK 5K RUN
&
FITNESS WALK**

7:00PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2013

HERITAGE DAY FESTIVAL

12:00PM - 4:00PM

**OVER 30 LOCAL
ATTRACTIONS**

**CITIPARKS
ROVING ART CART**

**STARS AT RIVERVIEW
CONCERT**

CINEMA IN THE PARK

Citiparks

412-255-2493

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Bill won praise for the Commodore Perry mural on the side of his Café, because he involved community volunteers and friends in the project. In fact it was the first Northside Mural completed as a project of 'Moving the Lives of Kids.' To read more about the project, see the Northside Chronicle link here: www.thenorthsidechronicle.com/mural-adds-some-color-to-perrysville-road/ Bill felt that Oliver Hazard Perry who helped the U.S. win the War of 1812 and coached his navy crew to "never give up" was a prime example of the value of perseverance. Also, Bill added the left panel which reads: 'I made a difference in the life of a child.' He lived each day with this sentiment in mind!

PARTNERSHIPS ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT PERRY

Perry High School and Allen Place are teaming to help students reach their goals in the health care profession. Because the Northside has strong health care providers with Allegheny General and CCAC sponsoring learning opportunities, the start of an added health care pathway may be a good way to open a few doors for students. Ms. Tia Ellis of Pittsburgh Perry and Mrs. Jerry Allen of Allen Place have been collaborating to build a partnership to provide added opportunities that they hope will be available in the fall.

Allen Place Community Services offers many programs for families and seniors such as computer classes, dance and cooking classe, stroke prevention workshops and Bible study groups. You'll find youth basketball on Tuesday at 6 p.m., Soul Line Dancing on Mondays at 6 p.m. and Family Night the 4th Friday at 6 p.m. For a Programs Guide phone 412-231-1531 or visit www.allenplacecommunity.org

Jerry hopes to assist Perry High School and AGH in providing a vehicle for students to become Certified Nursing Assistants [CNAs] through training and work experiences in the field after school hours starting this fall. In some cases, this training may lead to further education and work in the nursing field. If you are interested, call Mrs. Allen, 412-231-1531 or Ms. Ellis, 412-323-3400, or tellis1@pghboe.net

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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

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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